NATION

Caste curse plagues India in 2025

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1L tonne basmati rice for Iran stuck at Indian ports

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Pant becomes 2nd wicketkeeper to score 2 hundreds in a Test

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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PHOTO: X

Govt reclaims 120 acres of Kadugodi forest worth ₹4K cr

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

In a major green initiative, the Karnataka government reclaimed 120 acres of encroached forest land in Kadugodi Plantation, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bengaluru East Taluk, on Monday. The land, valued at over Rs 4,000 crore, was cleared following a directive by Forest, Environment and Ecology Minister Eshwar Khandre. He stated that this move is part of an ongoing effort to protect Bengaluru's rapidly vanishing green cover. Over the past two years, the government has reclaimed 248 acres of forest land in the city, preventing further illegal transfer of public forest land into private hands. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: X

Man beats daughter to death over NEET marks

SANGLI, 23 JUNE

A 16-year-old girl was bludgeoned to death by her father for scoring low marks in National Eligibility cum Entrance Testin Maharashtra's Sangli, police said on Monday. The incident occurred on Saturday night in Nelkaranji village, Atpadi tehsil. The accused, Dhondiram Bhosale, 45, a school teacher, attacked his daughter Sadhana, a Class 12 student, with a wooden handle of a stone grinder during a dispute. The assault took place in front of his wife and son. She died during treatment at a Sangli hospital. Based on her mother's complaint, police arrested Bhosale. *—PTI*

B'luru stampede: HC appoints amicus curiae

AGARTALA, 23 JUNE

State High Court on Monday appointed Senior Advocate S Susheela as amicus curiae in the case relating to the tragic stampede at Chinnaswamy stadium here on 4 June, which claimed 11 lives. A division bench led by Acting Chief Justice V Kameswar Rao and Justice CM Joshi directed that all pertinent materials, including the State government's status reports currently submitted in a sealed cover, be shared with the amicus. The court has tasked senior advocate Susheela with advising whether these reports should remain confidential or can be disclosed — either fully or selectively — to the other parties involved. *—PTI*

Iran hits US bases in Qatar, Iraq, Syria

Day after US' Operation Hammer, Iran attacks Doha; Israel hits 6 airfields, destroys 15 jets

DUBAI/JERUSALEM, 23 JUNE

Iran launched at least six missiles targeting US military bases in Qatar and Iraq on Monday, shortly after Qatari airspace was temporarily closed. Explosions were heard in Doha.

Qatar, hosts the major Al Udeid Air Base. US and UK citizens in Qatar were advised to take shelter.

Sources also reported an attack on a US military base in Syria's Hasakah province.

Iranian media outlet Tasnim reported that the missile barrage, dubbed "Annunciation of Victory", was in retaliation for Sunday's US bombing of key Iranian nuclear sites at Fordo, Natanz, and Isfahan using 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs.

Meanwhile, Iran's underground Fordo nuclear facility was struck again on Monday, Iranian media reported. Despite US President Donald Trump claiming "monumental damage," reports suggest the initial strikes failed to significantly damage the fortified mountain facility.

Israel launched coordinated airstrikes on six Iranian airports, claiming to have destroyed aircraft and missile depots. The Israeli military said over 15 fighter jets targeted missile sites in Kermanshah that posed a threat to Israeli territory. Iran responded with missiles and drones, warning Washington it now had a "free hand" to strike American assets. Tehran condemned the US strikes as a violation of its sovereignty.

In a further show of defiance, Iran moved to close the strategic Strait of Hormuz. At least two supertankers, including China's Coswisdom Lake, made abrupt U-turns near the waterway, though the Coswisdom Lake later resumed its route to the UAE's Zirku port.

Iran's Army Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, Commander-in-chief Gen Amir Hatami and Admiral Mahmoud Mousavi attend a meeting in Zolfaghar central headquarters, Iran *PHOTO: PTI*

India evacuates 443 Indians from Israel

Amid the escalating conflict, India intensified evacuation efforts under Operation Sindhu. On Monday, 443 Indian nationals crossed into Jordan and Egypt from Israel, following 160 the previous day—bringing the total evacuated to 603. The Ministry of External Affairs, working with embassies in the region, prioritised families with children, students, and medical emergencies. With over 40,000 Indians in Israel, many have taken shelter in rooms in Haifa, Ramat Gan, Beersheba, and Rehovot. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5, 6 & 7

Gambler Trump, you can start this war, but we will be the ones who end it

-Iran to Donald Trump, US President

India, Pak say US did not use their airspace

India and Pakistan have dismissed claims by certain social media handles that the US fighter jets used their airspace to launch strikes against Iran. "Several social media accounts have claimed that Indian Airspace was used by the United States to launch aircrafts against Iran during Operation #MidnightHammer. This claim is FAKE," PIB Fact Check said in a post on X on Sunday. "Indian Airspace was NOT used by the United States during Operation #MidnightHammer," said the fact check unit of the Press Information Bureau that functions under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. *—PTI*

ASSEMBLY BYPOLLS

Cong gains in Kerala as TMC, AAP win big in WB, Gujarat

United Democratic Front members celebrate the victory of Congress-led UDF in the Nilambur bypoll, in Kochi on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

New Delhi, 23 June – The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) scored a significant victory in Kerala's Nilambur constituency, boosting its prospects ahead of next year's Assembly elections. Congress candidate Aryadan Shoukath, son of veteran leader Aryadan Muhammed, defeated CPI(M) state secretariat member M Swaraj by 11,077 votes. This marks the fourth bypoll loss for the Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) during its current tenure, following earlier defeats in Puthuppally, Palakkad, and Thrikkakara.

Calling the result "an expected and significant victory," Shoukath said the win reflected growing dissatisfaction with the LDF government. The Nilambur result was part of a broader wave of bypolls held on 19 June across four states, with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) also posting strong performances.

In Gujarat, AAP's Gopal Italia won the Visavadar seat, while the party retained Ludhiana West in Punjab, where Sanjeev Arora defeated Congress' Bharat Bhushan Ashu by over 10,600 votes. These victories revived AAP's morale after poor showings in Delhi and the Lok Sabha polls.

In West Bengal, TMC retained the Kaliganj seat in Nadia with a huge margin. *—PTI*

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Congratulations to Aryadan Shoukath ji on a decisive victory in the #Nilambur Assembly bypoll. This is not just a win, it is a clear rejection of the LDF govt misrule and a powerful endorsement of the UDF people-centric and secular vision for Kerala

-Mansoor Khan, AICC Secretary (Kerala & Lakshadweep)

GIRL DIES IN BLAST DURING TMC VICTORY RALLY

KOLKATA, 23 JUNE

A nine-year-old girl was killed in a bomb explosion during a Trinamool Congress (TMC) victory rally in Kaliganj, located in West Bengal's Nadia district, on Monday afternoon, police said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said police would take strict legal action against the culprits. "I am shocked and deeply saddened at the death of a young girl in an explosion at Barochandgar. One person Akhtar Sheikh was arrested for his alleged involvement in the death of the girl in bomb explosion, an officer said. " Locals claimed that the girl along with her mother was going to a nearby pond to take a bath when she was hit by a bomb hurled by some people who took out a rally to celebrate the TMC's win in the bypoll. *—PTI*

Minor admitted for surgery, raped in Meerut hospital

MEERAT, 23 JUNE

A 15-year-old girl has been allegedly raped inside a medical college here while she was admitted for a leg operation.

The accused was arrested.

The girl was raped by the attendant of another patient in a toilet of the medical college on 20 June.

Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada said the local medical police station registered the FIR on the complaint of the girl's mother and arrested the accused on 22 June. "The girl will be medically examined on Monday," Tada said. According to police, the girl was admitted to the medical college for a leg operation on 20 June. A man, named Mohit, hailing from Uttarakhand was also admitted in the ward and his brother, the accused Rohit was the attendant. *—PTI*

Drunk men molest, assault woman in City

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

A 25-year-old woman was allegedly molested by a group of four "intoxicated" men on the outskirts of the city, leading to the arrest of one of the accused, police said on Monday.

They added that the incident occurred in Yellamma Layout near Mylasandra Road in Anekal taluk on Sunday at around 5 pm.

In her complaint, the woman alleged that she was going to a shop to purchase some essentials when she spotted a group of men fighting among themselves. Suddenly, they started teasing and abusing her. She further alleged that they touched her inappropriately despite her resistance.

The woman also claimed that when she tried to resist, they used vulgar and obscene language against her and physically attacked her. The woman informed her gym trainer about the incident, following which he reached the spot, rescued her, and allegedly hit one of the accused who had misbehaved with her.

Police said one of the accused has been arrested. *—PTI*

Murudeshwar temple enforces dress code

MURUDESHWAR, 23 JUNE

The management of the Murudeshwar temple in Uttara Kannada district implemented a dress code for devotees entering the inner sanctum, restricting the use of western attire in "sacred areas", sources said.

Men are required to wear either a traditional dhoti (panche) or full-length formal trousers, while women are permitted only in sarees or salwar kameez. The move prohibits casual or western-style clothing within specific parts of the temple premises. *—PTI*

Bhutto says Pak will go to war if India denies water

ISLAMABAD, 23 JUNE

Pakistan's former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday said his country will go to war if India denies Islamabad its fair share of water under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

India put in abeyance the 1960 agreement soon after the Pahalgam terrorist attack =Bilawal's comments came two days after Pakistan's Foreign Ministry criticised Shah's "brazen disregard" for international agreements.

Bilawal, in a speech in parliament, rejected the Indian decision to suspend the agreement, threatening to get Pakistan's share of water.

"India has two options: share water fairly, or we will deliver water to us from all six rivers," he said referring to the six rivers of the Indus basin. *—PTI*

Man dumps cancer-hit grandma in garbage

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

In a harrowing incident, a 60-year-old woman suffering from cancer was discovered lying atop heaps of rubbish in Aarey Colony, Mumbai, allegedly abandoned by her own grandson. The woman, identified as Yashoda Gaikwad, was found in a frail condition on Saturday, leading police to initiate an investigation into the disturbing circumstances of her abandonment.

After being located near a dump, Yashoda informed authorities that her grandson had left her there. Although she was found in the morning, it wasn't until 5.30pm that police successfully arranged for her admission to Cooper Hospital, after several healthcare facilities turned her away due to her critical state.

Yashoda is currently battling skin cancer and has provided police with two addresses belonging to her family members in Malad and Kandivali. The police are actively searching for her relatives, and her photograph has been circulated across local police stations in an effort to trace her family. *—Agencies*

'ACTING LIKE PERMANENT DGP'

DG&IGP Saleem booked for misrepresentation of status

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

MA Saleem, the In-Charge Director General & Inspector General of Police (DG&IGP) for Karnataka, has been booked following a complaint alleging misrepresentation of his official designation.

The complaint was filed by social activist T Narasimha Murthy at Halasur Gate Police Station. According to the complaint dated 23 June, Saleem, though appointed only in an "In-Charge" capacity as per a Karnataka Government notification issued on 21 May, 2025, has been presenting himself as the permanent DG & IGP—an act that allegedly violates a binding Supreme Court judgment.

Murthy cited the Prakash Singh & Ors. v. Union of India (2006) verdict, which prohibits the appointment of an "acting" DGP, insisting all such roles must be filled through a proper selection process for a fixed tenure.

MA Saleem *PHOTO: X*

Among the key allegations are that Dr Saleem issued official communications without using the terms "In-Charge" or "Prabhari", presented himself on social media simply as "DG & IGP", and displayed the same designation at his office, omitting any reference to his temporary status.

Murthy has argued that this amounts to a wilful or negligent misrepresentation of public authority, which could attract provisions under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). He has demanded an FIR and a detailed investigation into the matter. *—PTI*

6 injured as plaster falls off from classroom ceiling

GADAG, 23 JUNE

Five students and one teacher were injured after a portion of plaster from the concrete ceiling of a classroom fell on them. The incident occurred at the Government Higher Primary School at Chilageri village in Gajendragad taluk of Gadag district, following which Education Department officials inspected the school, which falls under the Gajendragad police station limits. Gadag Superintendent of Police BS Nemagouda said nearly 30 students were in the classroom when the incident took place around 11.30am. The injured have been admitted to a private hospital in Gajendragad. Sources said classes were being held in an old, dilapidated classroom. Villagers blamed the Education Department's laxity for causing the incident. *—Salar News*

Cong MLA vows to quit over 'admin failure'

CM rejects party MLA's claims; says people refer to all grants as 'special grants

BELAGAVI, 23 JUNE

Congress MLA Bharamgouda Alagouda Kage from Kagwad has threatened to resign from the Karnataka Assembly, citing an "administrative collapse" and delays in development work in his constituency. Speaking to reporters in Belagavi, Kage said, "The administration across the State has collapsed. I am hurt. I am seriously considering resigning. It wouldn't be surprising if I meet Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the next two days and submit my resignation."

Kage claimed that no development work has taken place in Kagwad for the past two years, echoing concerns raised by fellow Congress MLA BR Patil from Aland. He alleged stagnation and corruption in public works, saying, "I stand with Patil. It's been two years since any groundbreaking ceremony was held in our constituency."

According to Kage, although the Chief Minister had previously announced Rs 25 crore in special grants, including Rs 12 crore for road development and Rs 13 crore for community buildings, no work orders have been issued. "I am equally puzzled by the delay," he added.

Congress MLA Bharamgouda Alagouda Kage says no development work took place in Kagwad in the past two years *PHOTO: X/SCREENGRAB*

Patil had earlier alleged corruption in a government housing scheme, accusing officials of collecting money from beneficiaries. However, Housing Minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan has categorically denied the charges.

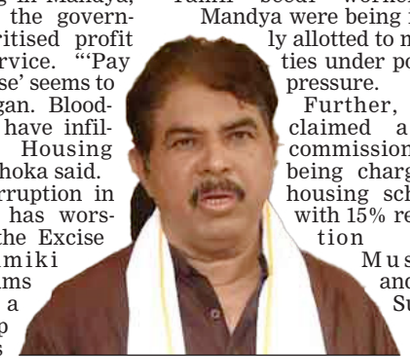
Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah responded from Raichur, saying he would speak with Kage. He clarified that there are no "special grants" as such, explaining, "People refer to all grants as 'special grants', but we only allocate them where genuinely required." *— PTI*

'Pay money, get a house' is Housing Board's slogan: BJP

MANDYA, 23 JUNE

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka has launched a scathing attack on the Congress-led Karnataka government, accusing it of turning the Housing Board into a "Collection Board." Speaking in Mandya, he alleged that the government had prioritised profit over public service. "'Pay money, get a house' seems to be the new slogan. Blood-sucking leeches have infiltrated the Housing Department," Ashoka said.

He claimed corruption in the department has worsened following the Excise and Valmiki Corporation scams and referred to a viral audio clip where Congress MLA BR Patil admitted to discussing bribes, demanding a thorough investigation.



Ashoka criticised the CM's recent resolution meeting in Ballari, calling it a "resolution to destroy the poor." He alleged houses meant for Tamil beedi workers in Mandya were being illegally allotted to minorities under political pressure.

Further, he claimed a 60% commission was being charged in housing schemes, with 15% reservation for Muslims and Tipu Sultan's descendants. "This is no longer a government of the people. It's a 60% commission regime," he said, demanding a CBI or judicial probe.

He also attacked the government over the Kaveri Aarti project at KRS, alleging that 100 crore was being siphoned off under the guise of religious activity.

BJP state president BY Vijayendra backed the allegations, stating that Congress MLAs like Patil and Kage had themselves exposed the government's failures.

"The wall of patience is withering," Vijayendra warned, urging Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to intervene, citing a total collapse of governance and rising despair even among ruling party MLAs. *— PTI*

PHOTO: MYSURU ZOO

Mysuru Zoo to hold 33rd Youth Club Programme

MYSURU, 23 JUNE

Mysuru Zoo will host the 33rd edition of its Youth Club for students aged 12 to 18. The programme, aimed at teaching the basics of wildlife conservation and animal management, will run for 25 Sundays from 10 am to 1pm, with 60 selected participants. Sessions will include both theory and practicals on biodiversity, animal behaviour, and conservation, with expert interactions. Applications are available at the Zoo office from 25 June and must be submitted with Aadhaar, a recent passport-sized photo, and a fee of Rs 2,500 by 28 June, 5 pm. For more details, visit www.mysuruzoo.info or email edumysore99@gmail.com *—Salar News*

AIDSO opposes closure of 6,000 govt schools

MYSURU, 23 JUNE

The district unit of the All India Democratic Students Organisation (AIDSO) staged a protest on Monday at Alaganchi village in Nanjangud taluk, opposing the state government's decision to close 6,000 government schools due to low enrolment. As part of the protest, AIDSO also held a signature campaign among villagers condemning the move. Protesters criticised the government's plan to merge these schools with nearby institutions instead of improving enrolment through quality education. They slammed the government for failing to recruit 59,000 vacant teaching posts and highlighted poor infrastructure in over 21,000 of the state's 46,000 schools—citing issues like leaky buildings, lack of toilets in 3,500 schools, no drinking water, and missing compound walls. AIDSO district secretary Nitin said the organisation has been raising awareness in villages like Alaganchi. *—Salar News*

Govt reclaims 120 acres of Kadugodi forest land

BENGALURU, 23 JUNE

In a major operation to protect Bengaluru's fast-depleting green cover, the Karnataka government on Monday reclaimed 120 acres of encroached forest land in Kadugodi Plantation, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bengaluru East Taluk. The land, valued at over Rs 4,000 crore, was cleared following a directive from Forest, Environment and Ecology Minister Eshwar Khandre.

The early morning operation was led by officers from the Bengaluru Urban Forest Department, supported by JCB machinery and tight police security. Encroachments were removed, boundaries demarcated, fencing erected, and native saplings planted to aid ecological restoration.

Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) Sivasankar Sengottuvel told Salar News, "Approximately 130 acres of forest land are under reclamation by the Forest Department. Notices will be issued to those responsible for illegal construction. None of the individuals or entities involved possess the necessary documents to justify their occupation of the forest land."

The early morning operation was led by officers from the Bengaluru Urban Forest Department amid tight police security *PHOTO: SALAR*

The reclaimed land falls under Survey No. 1 of Kadugodi Plantation. Officials said the area was illegally occupied and development had occurred without any valid authorisation.

During a recent review meeting, Minister Khandre expressed concern over Bengaluru's rapid urban expansion and the steady depletion of green zones. He stressed that forest encroachments must be cleared in accordance with the law and that green spaces, vital as the city's "breathing zones," must be preserved.

Since Khandre assumed office, 128 acres of forest land in Bengaluru have been reclaimed. With Monday's clearance, the total now stands at 248 acres, valued at over Rs 8,000 crore. *—Salar News*

On way to event, minister Khandre cancels Arjuna memorial unveiling

MYSURU, 23 JUNE

The inaugural ceremony of the newly built memorial for Dasara elephant Arjuna at Balle in Nagarahole Tiger Reserve was postponed on Monday to 27 June. Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre had travelled up to Srirangapatna on his way to Balle Elephant Camp when he suddenly cancelled the event and returned to Bengaluru. While Khandre cited personal reasons for the change of plans, there are rumours that HD Kote MLA Anil Chikkamadu, who is also chairman of Jungle Lodges and Resorts (JLR), insisted that the minister focus on the elephant problem in the area. Khandre said he would do it some other time, but the MLA put pressure on him. Chikkamadu, however, said he has no differences with the minister. Arjuna had been taking part in Mysuru Dasara since 1990. *—Salar News*

After 13 years, Ambedkar Bhavan still incomplete

MYSURU, 23 JUNE

Thirteen years after its foundation was laid, the construction of BR. Ambedkar Bhavan on Dewan's Road in Mysuru remains incomplete, drawing sharp criticism from Prabhudha Bharatha Bheem Sene. The organisation's president, Siddaraju, has warned of launching an indefinite protest if construction does not resume within 15 days.

Addressing media on Monday, Siddaraju described the delay as a "grave insult" to Dr Ambedkar. He criticised the inaction despite Mysuru being represented by key leaders like Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and District Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa, both known for championing Ambedkar's ideals.

Siddaraju demanded transparency and accountability from the authorities.

"If there are genuine hurdles, they should be made public. Silence is not an option," he said. *— PTI*

Siddaramaiah inaugurates ₹936 cr development projects in Raichur

RAICHUR, 23 JUNE

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated development projects valued at Rs 936 crore in the Raichur assembly constituency, reaffirming the Congress government's dedication to fulfilling its electoral promises.

During his address at the Tribal Cultural Festival, organised by the Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department alongside the District Administration, the Chief Minister unveiled the nameplate of the Adikavi Maharshi Valmiki University and participated in the 371st Dashamanotsav celebrations. He emphasised his government's commitment to delivering on the 560 guarantees made during the recent elections, noting that 235 of these have already been achieved and the remainder are expected to be completed within the next three years.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah unveils the nameplate of the Adikavi Maharshi Valmiki University in Raichur on Monday *PHOTO: X/SIDDHU*

Siddaramaiah criticised the previous BJP government for "neglecting development" and accused them of spreading false propaganda due to their frustration over the Congress party's successes. He recalled that from 2013 to 2018, the former Congress government not only fulfilled all its promises but also realised additional commitments beyond the manifesto.

The Chief Minister highlighted the steep rise in prices for essential commodities, including gold, silver, rice, pulses, cooking oil, LPG, petrol, diesel, and fertilizers, and attributed this burden to the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He accused the BJP of misleading the public while remaining in power. *— PTI*

People won't accept insult of Oppn: Kharge tells Modi

RAICHUR, 23 JUNE

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "trivialising" the opposition and skipping all-party meetings convened after the Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 civilians. Addressing a public gathering in Raichur, Karnataka, Kharge said Modi's absence from the meetings reflected his "scant respect" for democratic norms.

Kharge lauded the armed forces for swiftly striking terror bases across the border but condemned attempts by some individuals to take undue credit. "If they had served as a captain or colonel, we'd have applauded them. But that's not the case," he remarked, without naming the PM directly.

He questioned why the Prime Minister was absent from crucial meetings while leaders from across the country made time to attend. "Modi was in India but chose to campaign in Bihar instead. This is unacceptable when the country is in crisis."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said Modi's absence from meetings reflected his "scant respect" for democratic norms *PHOTO: ANI*

Kharge also criticised Modi for remaining silent on the US imposing retaliatory tariffs and for inaction during the Iran-Israel conflict. He accused the government of saffronising education and claimed RSS-linked individuals were favoured in public appointments. *—PTI*

DyCM's brother Suresh faces ED officials in 'fraud' case

BENGALURU/ NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Former MP DK Suresh on Monday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for questioning in a money laundering case against a woman who is alleged to have cheated a number of people, official sources said on Monday. The ED on Monday also attached assets worth about Rs 4 crore belonging to Gowda.

The federal probe agency arrested the woman, Aishwarya Gowda, 33, in April, following searches against her, Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni and some others.

The ED had then said in a statement that the woman claimed proximity with various "high-profile" politicians and cheated people by promising them high returns against gold, cash and bank deposits. She is alleged to have used the name of Suresh, who is Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's brother, and claimed to be his sister.

DK Suresh *PHOTO: FB*

"The ED issued a notice asking me to appear before the investigation officer at 11am. They had sought some information. So, today I am meeting the ED officers with my lawyer," Suresh said.

He said this case was unrelated to him. "I am unable to understand why the notice was served to me.

I was the one who had lodged a complaint with the police commissioner against the woman who had orally said that she is my sister. I have no connection with the cheating case," Suresh said.

There are at least three cheating cases registered at Chandra Layout and Rajarajeshwari Nagar police stations in Bengaluru against Gowda, her husband Harish KN and some others. *—PTI*

WRONG DIAGNOSIS

Nurse gets ₹13.5L over lost overseas job

UDUPI, 23 JUNE

A senior nurse in Udupi was on Monday awarded Rs 13.49 lakh in compensation by the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission after she lost a job opportunity in Saudi Arabia due to a false hepatitis C diagnosis.

Shivakumar Shettigar, 43, a qualified industrial nurse from Udupi, was slated to join the United Medical Response Company in the gulf nation this February.

However, a pre-departure medical test conducted at the National CT Scanner and Diagnostic Center in Mangaluru incorrectly indicated that he was positive for Hepatitis C, a condition that disqualifies candidates under Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) medical norms.

A pre-departure medical test conducted at a Mangaluru laboratory incorrectly indicated that Shivakumar Shettigar, an industrial nurse from Udupi slated to join the United Medical Response Company in Saudi Arabia, was positive for Hepatitis C *PHOTO: X*

Distressed by the result, Shettigar underwent follow-up testing at a private lab in Manipal and at the district government hospital in Udupi, both of which confirmed he was negative.

Alleging negligence and the use of faulty kits, Shettigar moved the consumer forum, claiming the lab's error cost him not only the job but also significant emotional and financial distress.

According to a court directive, after examining evidence and hearing both parties, the commission ruled in Shettigar's favour on 21 May, 2025, directing the diagnostic centre to pay Rs 13.49 lakh in damages within 45 days, with a 6 per cent annual interest applicable in case of default.

The compensation amount accounts for three years of lost income (estimated at Rs 82,584 per month), in addition to medical costs and mental agony. *—PTI*

Lalu vies for re-election as RJD president

PATNA, 23 JUNE

RJD President Lalu Prasad on Monday filed his nomination papers to seek re-election to the top post in the party he has been heading since its inception nearly three decades ago. The 78-year-old, who has grown frail because of age and multiple ailments, reached the party office, accompanied by wife Rabri Devi and younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav. A large number of RJD workers had reached the party office to catch a glimpse of the leader, once known for his earthy but electrifying presence. Yadav said, "A wave of delight has swept across party workers upon Lalu ji completing his tenure and raring to go for another. We are confident his leadership will steer us to victory." *—PTI*

97 'anti-nationals' held in Assam post Pahalgam attack

GUWAHATI, 23 JUNE

Two people have been arrested from different parts of Assam for allegedly being "anti-Hindu" on Monday. This takes the total number of arrests to 97 so far as part of a crackdown began in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday. In a post on X, Sarma said one person each was apprehended from Tinsukia and Nagaon districts. "Crackdown on anti-Hindu elements continues... 97 anti-national and anti-Hindu culprits behind bars now," he added. The person from Tinsukia had shared objectionable content on Hinduism on social media, while the one from Nagaon made a derogatory comment on Lord Ram, the CM said. Earlier, opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested for allegedly defending Pakistan. *—PTI*

Notice issued to BJP MLA for assault on Vande Bharat

LUCKNOW, 23 JUNE

Uttar Pradesh BJP unit has issued a show-cause notice to Babina MLA Rajeev Singh Parichha following a viral video showing his alleged supporters in a violent altercation with a fellow passenger aboard the Vande Bharat Express. The incident, which occurred on 19 June as Parichha was travelling from Delhi to Bhopal with his family, depicts a group of men reportedly associated with the MLA assaulting a passenger, leaving him visibly injured. The clip ignited significant online backlash, particularly after former MP Congress MLA Mukesh Nayak shared it, labelling Parichha's actions as "hooliganism". *—PTI*

Bihar police raids associates of RJD MLA for extortion

PATNA, 23 JUNE

Bihar Police executed a series of raids targeting associates of RJD MLA Ritlal Yadav, implicated in an extortion case based in Patna. The searches, conducted between Sunday and Monday, aimed to apprehend four absconding associates believed to have threatened a complainant regarding an unpaid extortion demand. Yadav, who represents Danapur constituency, is currently in judicial custody related to the same case, which involves allegations that his associates demolished a building owned by complainant. City Superintendent of Police Bhanu Pratap Singh confirmed that the investigation stems from a complaint alleging coercive actions by Yadav's associates. Surrendering to court, Yadav has claimed that allegations against him are part of a political conspiracy & expressed fears for his life, citing ongoing threats. *—PTI*

Ahead of polls, AAP and TMC win bypolls in Gujarat & WB

AAP's Gopal Italia defeated BJP's Kirit Patel by 17,554 votes

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

AAP and TMC secured key victories in bypolls across Gujarat, Punjab, and West Bengal, providing momentum ahead of the 2026 and 2027 Assembly elections.

AAP registered significant wins in Gujarat and Punjab. In Gujarat, former AAP state unit chief Gopal Italia won the Visavadar seat, while the BJP retained Kadi. The Congress suffered a blow, with its state president Shaktisinh Gohil resigning, accepting moral responsibility for the defeat on both seats. In Punjab, AAP's Sanjeev Arora won the Ludhiana (West) Assembly seat, defeating Congress' Bharat Bhushan Ashu by over 10,600 votes. Both seats were earlier held by AAP.

Following the results, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal declared a "typhoon will come in 2027," predicting his party would defeat both the BJP and Congress. He accused Congress of aiding the BJP in the bypolls, branding it a "kathputli" (puppet) of the ruling party and urged Congress workers to join AAP. Kejriwal said AAP's Gujarat win signals public fatigue with 30 years of BJP rule, positioning AAP as the true alternative.

Meanwhile, in West Bengal, TMC retained the Kaliganj Assembly seat with a landslide margin of 50,049 votes over BJP's Ashish Ghosh. TMC attributed the victory to "people's love" and confidence in Mamata Banerjee's development agenda. Banerjee dedicated the win to "Maa, Mati, Manush" and remembered late MLA Nasiruddin Ahmed.

TMC's Derek O'Brien noted the party has now won all 11 bypolls in Bengal since the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, with an improved vote share. However, BJP's Amit Malviya claimed the party had received its highest-ever Hindu vote share in Kaliganj, citing increased "Hindutva consciousness" and a backlash from the Murshidabad riots. These results come as both Gujarat and Punjab prepare for Assembly polls in 2027. *—PTI*

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) workers shout slogans and celebrate after Gopal Italiya's victory over BJP in the Visavadar Assembly by-election, at the party office, in Ahmedabad *PHOTO: PTI*

> **The truth: Mamata Banerjee's TMC is surviving on a captive vote bank of Muslims, illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators and radical elements. Just like they dumped the Left, Hindus of Bengal have dumped Mamata**
>
> -Amit Malviya, BJP's co-incharge for State

Cong's Gohil resigns after bypoll defeat

AHMEDABAD, 23 JUNE

Gujarat Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil resigned on Monday, taking moral responsibility for party's poor performance in recent by-elections in Kadi and Visavadar. Visavadar seat was won by AAP leader Gopal Italia, while BJP's Rajendra Chavda secured victory in Kadi. Congress candidates finished a distant third in both contests. "As the results did not meet expectations, I have taken moral responsibility and resigned," Gohil said at a press conference, confirming he emailed his resignation to party President Mallikarjun Kharge. *—PTI*

PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK

NIA gets five-day custody of two Pakistanis

JAMMU, 23 JUNE

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two residents of Pahalgam—Parvaiz Ahmad Jothar of Batkote and Bashir Ahmad Jothar of Hill Park—for harbouring three Pakistani terrorists linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), who carried out the deadly 22 April, terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

The accused allegedly provided shelter, food, and logistical support to the militants at a seasonal hut in the Hill Park area prior to the attack.

Investigations confirmed that the terrorists were Pakistani nationals, with one identified as Hashim Musa, ex-commando from the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group.

Two other terrorists involved were identified as Ali Bhai, a Pakistani national, and Adil Hussain Thoker, a Kashmiri trained in Pakistan.

Parvaiz and Bashir have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and remanded to five days' NIA custody by a Jammu court.

In a separate operation, J&K Police attached a 1.3 marla plot of land in Udhampur's Kadwah village belonging to terror accused Mohd Shafiq, currently in judicial custody. The property was seized under Section 25 of the UAPA. *—PTI*

DILJIT RECEIVES BACKLASH FOR WORKING WITH PAK ACTRESS

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Punjabi singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh's upcoming film "Sardaar Ji 3" will now release only in overseas territories on 27 June, following backlash over the casting of Pakistani actress Hania Aamir. All-Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) condemned the decision, citing the recent Pahalgam terror attack in J&K. AICWA accused Dosanjh of disrespecting national sentiment and prioritising Pakistani talent amid heightened India-Pak tensions. Social media users echoed calls for a boycott. *– PTI*

Jagan booked after his car runs over man

GUNTUR, 23 JUNE

YSRCP chief and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been named as an accused in a fatal road accident that allegedly occurred when he was on his way to Rentapalla village in Palnadu district recently, a police official said.

Guntur district Superintendent of Police S Satish Kumar, addressing a press conference late on Sunday said that upon receiving the information about the old man, Singaiah, who suffered severe bleeding injuries, he was rushed to a hospital but was declared brought dead by doctors.

On June 18, Reddy visited Rentapalla to call on a family member of a YSRCP leader who had died by suicide a year ago.

The former CM's vehicle went through the Etukuru bypass.

A case was initially registered under Section 106(1) of BNS (causing death by negligence) based on a complaint by the deceased person's wife, Cheeli Lurdhu Mary, at the local police station.

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy

PHOTO: PTI

After analysing CCTV footage, drone visuals, and circumstantial evidence, "police confirmed that the deceased was run over by the Ex-CM's vehicle in the convoy," said police.

Following this "confirmation", police altered the case to include Sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 49 of BNS (Abetment) and intensified the investigation into the circumstances involved.

Other accused include Reddy's driver Ramana Reddy, Personal Assistant K Nageshwar Reddy, senior YSRCP leader YV Subbareddy, former MLA Perni Venkataramaiah, and former Minister Vidadala Rajini, Kumar told reporters. *—PTI*

- According to Guntur district SP S Satish Kumar, the victim, an elderly man named Singaiah, suffered severe injuries and was rushed to hospital, where he was declared brought dead.

Samajwadi Party expels 3 MLAs for cross-voting

LUCKNOW, 23 JUNE

The Samajwadi Party (SP) announced the expulsion of three MLAs: Abhay Singh (Gosainganj), Rakesh Pratap Singh (Gauriganj), and Manoj Kumar Pandey (Unchahar), due to allegations of cross-voting in favour of BJP during Rajya Sabha elections last year.

This decision, described by SP chief Akhilesh Yadav as a response to the MLAs supporting "communal and divisive ideologies," was taken after a grace period granted for self-correction expired.

The party accused these legislators of undermining its core values and working against public interests, insisting there would be zero tolerance for actions detrimental to public welfare.

Reflecting on his expulsion, Pandey ridiculed party's leadership and claimed he had joined BJP publicly last year. Rakesh Pratap Singh, on other hand, expressed gratitude for his expulsion, criticising SP's internal policies. *—PTI*

Past surgeries helped identify crash victims: MLA

AHMEDABAD, 23 JUNE

As bodies of Air India plane crash victims were charred beyond recognition, characteristics, such as metal rods in persons who had undergone surgeries in the past, proved crucial in the identification process, a local MLA involved in tagging corpses after the deadly tragedy said on Monday.

BJP MLA Dr Hasmukh Patel was one of the first legislators to reach the post-mortem section of the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital, where bodies were brought in after the crash in which 270 people died.

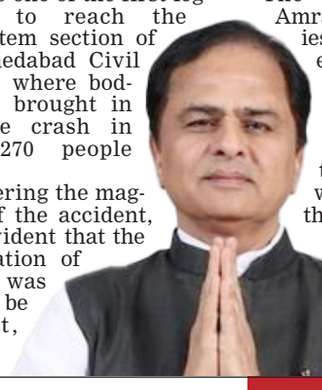
Considering the magnitude of the accident, it was evident that the identification of victims was going to be difficult, Patel said.

"The (BJP) MLAs got a message from the party to reach the crash site, but it was chaotic. I called the civil hospital and was told that bodies were being brought there," he said.

By the time Patel, who is also a doctor, reached the facility, seven or eight bodies had been brought to the post-mortem section, and they were completely charred, he said.

The legislator from Amraiwadi said some bodies were burnt to such an extent that parts of them were coming off.

"We started tagging the bodies with tapes with the sequence of their arrivals. The tags would be put with the cotton tape on the body parts wherever possible – head, chest, arm," he said. *—PTI*



AI flight to Jammu forced to return to Delhi

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

An Air India flight from Delhi to Srinagar, via Jammu, was forced to return to its departure airport on Monday afternoon. Flight IX-2564 was scheduled to land in Jammu around midday before continuing to Srinagar, but hovered above the airport for a period before the pilot opted to return to Delhi without landing. While officials confirmed that weather conditions & runway were clear, it appears pilot was unable to identify a suitable landing area. Further details are yet to be disclosed. *—Agencies*

IndiGo flight delayed due to minor technical issue

INDORE, 23 JUNE

An IndiGo flight from Indore to Bhubaneswar, carrying 140 passengers, experienced a "minor technical snag" that delayed its departure by nearly an hour on Monday. Airport director Vipin Kant Seth reported that flight 6E 6332 encountered the issue while taxiing towards the runway. The aircraft was returned to the apron for repairs, which were promptly completed without de-boarding any passengers. Originally scheduled to take off at 9am, the flight eventually departed at 10.16am after the necessary maintenance was performed. Details of the technical glitch have not been disclosed. *—PTI*

'Anganwadi services to have face recognition'

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Congress party has lambasted Modi government following its directive that mandates facial recognition authentication for beneficiaries of anganwadi services, alleging that the move aims to systematically exclude vulnerable populations from essential welfare entitlements. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh stated that government is using technology to further marginalise disadvantaged groups, recalling past instances where systems like Aadhaar have blocked access to benefits. Ramesh emphasised that the new facial recognition requirement, effective from 1 July for take-home rations & attendance tracking, could pose additional barriers for pregnant women and children relying on govt support. *– PTI*

CONGRESS' GOOGLY

Tharoor calls Modi 'prime asset' for India

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's energy, dynamism and willingness to engage remains a "prime asset" for India on the global stage but deserves greater backing, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said on Monday, in remarks that are likely to irk his party and widen the growing cracks in his ties with its leadership.

Tharoor's praise for the PM comes at a time when the Congress has been consistently attacking the Modi government over its foreign policy, alleging that Indian diplomacy is being "shattered" and the country stands "isolated" globally.In an article published in The Hindu, he said diplomatic outreach following "Op Sindoor" was a moment of national resolve and effective communication.

PM's Office shared his article on X and said, "Lok Sabha MP and former Union Minister Shashi Tharoor writes- Lessons from Op Sindoor's global outreach."

He said the lessons learned -- the power of unity, the efficacy of clear communication, the strategic value of soft power and the imperative of sustained public diplomacy -- will undoubtedly serve as guiding principles as India navigates an increasingly complex international landscape, leveraging its three Ts -- tech, trade and tradition -- and always striving for a more just, secure, and prosperous world.

Following the Pahalgam attack, Tharoor has been making comments on the India-Pakistan conflict and the diplomatic outreach that are at variance with the stand of Congress. *—PTI*

Shashi Tharoor *PHOTO: PTI*

- In an article published in The Hindu, he said diplomatic outreach following "Operation Sindoor" was a moment of national resolve and effective communication.

Achuthanandan suffers cardiac arrest at 101

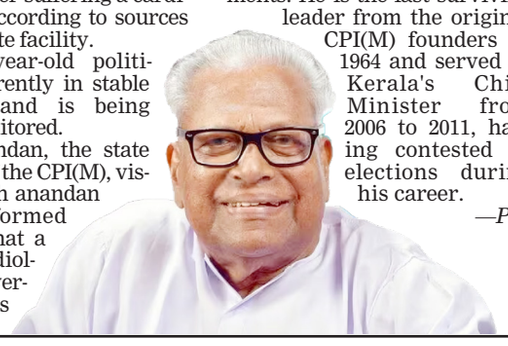
T'PURAM, 23 JUNE

Former chief minister of Kerala and esteemed Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader VS Achuthanandan has been hospitalised after suffering a cardiac arrest, according to sources at the private facility.

The 101-year-old politician is currently in stable condition and is being closely monitored.

MV Govindan, the state secretary of the CPI(M), visited Achuth anandan and informed reporters that a team of cardiologists is overseeing his treatment.

Regarded as a significant figure in Kerala's political landscape, Achuthanandan has faced various health issues in recent years, leading to his withdrawal from public engagements. He is the last surviving leader from the original CPI(M) founders in 1964 and served as Kerala's Chief Minister from 2006 to 2011, having contested 10 elections during his career. *—PTI*



Caste curse plagues India in 2025

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Fire breaks out on 'Anupamaa' set in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

A fire erupted on the set of the popular Hindi television serial 'Anupamaa' at the Film City complex in Mumbai on Monday morning. Fortunately, there were no injuries reported as a result of the blaze, which took approximately four hours to control. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation's fire brigade received an emergency call at 6.10am regarding the incident in a tent area behind the Marathi Bigg Boss set in Goregaon East. The fire was primarily confined to electric wiring, plastic materials, studio equipment, and lighting systems spread over 5,000 square feet. Four fire engines and jumbo tankers were dispatched to the site, and the blaze was extinguished. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.—*PTI*

Gangrape case: Odisha govt, DGP get NHRC notice

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued a notice to the Odisha government and the state's police chief in connection with the alleged gangrape of a 20-year-old college student at Gopalpur sea beach in Odisha's Ganjam district. The victim had reportedly gone to the beach along with a male friend on 16 June when 10 men overpowered her friend and gangraped her. The Commission observed that the incident was a violation of human rights. The report will include the status of the investigation along with the victim's health and compensation/ counseling, if any, provided to her by state authorities. The police detained seven suspects in the case.—*PTI*

Assam to get 3,000-MW power project

GUWAHATI, 23 JUNE

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that two plots of land in Dhubri and Goalpara have been earmarked for a 3,000-MW thermal power project, with foundations expected to be laid by November. While initially considering Kokrajhar for the investment, the government decided against it due to concerns over tribal land acquisition. Sarma stated that the Rs 40,000 crore worth project, aims to create 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. He referenced a Rs 26,000-crore semiconductor unit by Tata Group in Jagiroad as a benchmark. Although only 80 families possess the land, other developments could be appropriate there. —*PTI*

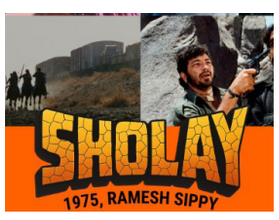


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Uncut version of 'Sholay' to premiere in Italy

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The iconic Indian film 'Sholay' will be premiered in its restored and uncut version at the prestigious Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna, Italy, commemorating its 50th anniversary. The screening is scheduled for 27 June at Piazza Maggiore. Starring Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra, 'Sholay' is a landmark in Indian cinema, known for its memorable characters and stunning dialogues. Amitabh Bachchan expressed nostalgia, recalling the film's initial struggles and its eventual success, while Dharmendra praised the restoration efforts. The restoration, took three years to complete, including locating the original ending and previously unseen scenes.—*PTI*

Woman marries outside faith, last rites held

KALYANI, 23 JUNE

Woman's kin hold last rites over inter-faith marriage PHOTO: ANI

The family of a young woman, who eloped and married a man of a different religion, performed the 'shradh' ceremony or last rites of their living daughter in West Bengal's Nadia district.

The family of the second-year old student of a local college said the last rites were held as she brought dishonour to the members and she was "dead" to them.

The ritual was conducted 12 days after she eloped and got married.

"She is as good as dead to us.....She brought disrepute by leaving us this way," her uncle Somnath Biswas said.

All rituals of were followed including tonsuring of heads. A garlanded photo of the woman was also placed where the priest conducted the ceremony.

The family had arranged the marriage for the student, but she revolted. Following arguments with her family, she left home with a youth with a different religion.

Biswas did not clarify if the youth being from a different faith influenced their decision.

The girl's father works abroad but he extended support to the family's decision, according to Biswas.

The woman is with her in-laws elsewhere in the district and being counselled by psychologists.

The police did not take any action as she is an adult. – *PTI*

Seniors abuse IndiGo employee over caste

GURUGRAM, 23 JUNE

- Sharan from the Adi Dravida community was subjected to caste-based remarks several times at the workplace. He was issued warning letters without any fault or proof. His salary was cut, sick leaves curtailed and staff travel and ACM privileges were cancelled.

An employee of budget carrier IndiGo has lodged a police complaint against three of his seniors, alleging that they used casteist slurs against him during a company meeting.

IndiGo employees Tapas Dey, Manish Sahni and Captain Rahul Patil said that the employee, Sharan A was "not fit to fly" and "must stitch shoes" instead during a meeting.

IndiGo, however, dismissed the claims as "baseless" and said it maintained a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of harassment.

IndiGo remained firmly committed to being an inclusive and respectful workplace, it said.

Sharan A, 35, from Bengaluru filed the complaint, based on which a zero FIR was registered by the city police. Bengaluru police transferred the case to their Gurugram police, who registered an FIR on 22 June.

Sharan hailing from the Adi Dravida community, a scheduled caste, was subjected to caste-based remarks several times at the workplace.

He was issued warning letters without any fault or proof. His salary was cut, sick leaves curtailed and staff travel and ACM privileges were cancelled for no valid reason. He was also forced to resign.

The CEO and the ethics committee of IndiGo did not take action even after being informed by Sharan about the abuse he faced. – *PTI*

POSCO CASE BOOKED

Himachal teacher held for sexually abusing 24 students

SHIMLA, 23 JUNE

- Students of classes VIII to X of the Government Model Senior Secondary School complained to the school principal, Kanta Devi about the mathematics teacher sexually harassing them.

A teacher has been arrested for allegedly sexually harassing 24 girl students at a government school in Rajgarh in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh, police sources said on Monday.

The arrest came after 24 students of classes VIII to X of the Government Model Senior Secondary School complained to the school principal, Kanta Devi about the mathematics teacher sexually harassing them.

They gave a written complaint on 20 June the teacher touched them inappropriately. The complaint was then forwarded to the school's anti-sexual harassment committee.

The school authorities informed police.

On 21 June, the students' parents were called for a meeting and it was found that most of them were unaware of the harassment faced by their children. The parents demanded the teacher's dismissal from the school and accused the school management of soft-pedalling the issue.

However, the school administration claimed ignorance on the matter until the students complained.

The police arrested the teacher. A case has been registered against him under Section 75 (sexual harassment) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and relevant provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the police sources said. – *PTI*

Meitei outfit leader held for murder

IMPHAL, 23 JUNE

Youths clean a street on Manipur Police's direction to clear the things they had thrown on the roads during protests in Imphal valley following the arrest of Arambai Tenggol leader, Asem Kanan Singh PHOTO: PTI

A leader of Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol (AT) was arrested for his alleged involvement in the murder of a differently abled person in Manipur's Imphal West district, police said on Monday.

Police, in a statement, said that the arrested AT leader, identified as Longjam Khaba Singh, 35, a resident of Yumnam Huidrom Thiyam Leishangkhong, was the main accused in the murder of Md Chesam Abdul Kadir of Paobitek Mayai Leikai.

He was arrested from Mongsangei Makha Leikai Arubam Leikai near Puthiba Laibung Complex on 22 June.

10 people, including seven AT members, have been arrested in connection with the murder.

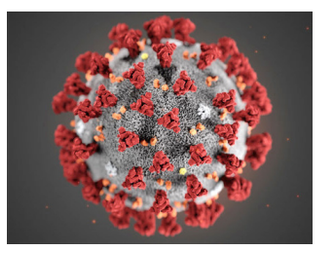
Meanwhile, four militants belonging to the proscribed outfit PREPAK (PRO) were arrested in Manipur's Imphal East district and a cache of arms and ammunition was seized from their possession, police said on Monday.

The arrested militants were identified as Thingbaijam Philip Singh, Lourembam Kumar Meitei, Laishram Haridas and Yumnam Akash Singh. They were arrested from different places in the district on Sunday.

Based on inputs from the militants, security forces launched a search in the foothills of Kalika in the district, and a cache of arms and ammunition was seized, police said. —*PTI*

India's Covid cases down to 4,425

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI, 23 JUNE



- One new death was recorded in Chhattisgarhin the last 24 hours, taking the total fatalities this year to 124. Most covid cases are mild and managable at home.

India's active Covid-19 cases dropped to 4,425 on Monday, down from 5,012 on Sunday, according to official data available on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

One new death was recorded in Chhattisgarhin the last 24 hours, taking the total fatalities this year to 124.

Among other states, Assam reported the recovery of five people from the infection in the last 24 hours, according to official data released on Monday.

According to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website, there are 41 active cases in Assam, down by four since Sunday's figure.

Since January this year, Assam has seen 50 people recovering from COVID-19, including five in the last 24 hours, it added.

There are 4,425 active COVID-19 cases in India, and one more death has been reported in the last 24 hours, the Ministry said. Official sources have maintained that most cases are mild and managed under home care. —*PTI*

Actor Srikanth held for buying cocaine

CHENNAI, 23 JUNE

Tamil actor Srikanth was questioned by the police on Monday for allegedly purchasing cocaine.

The police also probed the involvement of another actor in the use of drugs and the reported links with drug peddlers.

Srikanth was questioned after a drug peddler, who had been recently arrested confessed to having sold drugs to the actor.

Following this, the police subjected the actor's blood samples for medical investigation to ascertain the use of drugs. The police were yet to issue an official statement.

The Nungambakkam police arrested Pradeep Kumar of Salem and based on information from him, they arrested John of Ghana from Hosur in the state.About 11 grams of cocaine were seized. —*PTI*

WII takes u-turn on pay cut for skipping Yoga Day

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in Dehradun sparked controversy on Monday after warning staff that June salaries would be withheld for those who skipped the International Yoga Day event on 21 June without prior notice. An internal email cited poor attendance—only 75 of over 600 employees joined the event—despite repeated reminders. Staff were asked to submit written explanations for their absence, with the finance officer instructed to withhold salaries until records were verified. However, the message was retracted within hours. WII Director Virendra Tiwari told PTI the communication was a routine administrative email and no such action would be taken. An employee said attendance was never declared mandatory and called the threat "a bit too much". The government promotes Yoga Day as a national wellness initiative, but participation among central government staff has generally been voluntary. The incident raised concerns over administrative overreach and employee rights. —*PTI*

13 held in R'than for objectionable post on Yoga Day

JAIDSALMER, 23 JUNE

At least 13 people were arrested in Pokaran, Rajasthan, after tensions flared over an allegedly offensive social media post related to International Yoga Day, police said on Monday. The unrest began after a man was arrested for sharing the post, prompting a crowd to gather outside Pokaran Police Station o 22 June. Local sarpanch's husband Firoz Khan incited the gathering and was arrested along with five associates for obstructing government work and causing unrest. Seven others were held for breach of peace. The situation is under control now. —*PTI*

Andhra man dies after wedding, wife blamed

HYDERABAD, 23 JUNE

Tejeswar with wife Ishwarya on the day of their wedding PHOTO: X/ Sowmith Yakkati

A man in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, has been found dead a month after his wedding, prompting police to detain his wife and her mother for questioning. According to the details, Tejeswar, 32, went missing on 17 June, shortly after marrying Ishwarya on 18 May. His body was discovered in a canal, leading his family to allege that Ishwarya was involved in an extramarital affair and may have plotted his murder.

Tejeswar's family claimed Ishwarya had previously been in a relationship with a bank employee, which they believed jeopardised their marriage. Despite their warnings, Tejeswar remained committed to Ishwarya.

In a parallel case, the murder of businessman Raja Raghuvanshi during his honeymoon has sparked national outrage. Police are investigating both the cases. —*PTI*

THREAT TO WILDLIFE

Odisha to ease forest laws to boost tourism

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

The Odisha government sought to ease environmental restrictions to promote tourism inside and around some of its most ecologically sensitive regions, including national parks, tiger reserves, coastal zones and Ramsar wetlands, according to government records.

Legal and conservation experts said this move will undermine forest, wildlife and biodiversity laws and tribal rights.

The state plans to revisit and amend Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) notifications to remove clauses prohibiting construction and commercial activities.

It will request the Centre to allow forest land to be used for non-site-specific purposes such as hospitality infrastructure and to re-examine Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) classifications to accommodate more tourism projects along the coast.

Retd IFS officer and ESZ guidelines author Prakriti Srivastava said the guidelines were designed to limit human impact, reduce human-wildlife conflict and maintain wildlife corridors.

The Odisha Coastal Zone Management Authority will re-examine CRZ classifications to support tourism in areas having "extremely high potential".

An empowered committee led by additional chief secretary, Forest and Environment Department will be set up to discuss issues relating to tourism projects vis-a-vis forest clearance and ESZs.

Experts say Odisha's move could allow economic interests to shape regulatory frameworks meant for ecological protection and mark a dangerous departure from India's legal and ecological commitments.

The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, prohibits commercial construction inside national parks and sanctuaries unless it directly supports conservation or is part of approved low-impact tourism. It violates the Supreme Court ruling mandating a buffer around all protected areas. —*PTI*

WOMAN, BULL KILLED IN LIGHTNING STRIKE IN UP'S MORADABAD

MORADABAD, 23 JUNE

A woman and a bull were killed when lightning struck a bullock cart in Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad district on Sunday evening. The incident occurred in Manpur Muzaffarpur village as a family returned from the fields amid sudden rainfall. Salma, 45, and the bull tied to the cart died instantly, while two others—Safiri, 40, and Arif, 24, sustained serious burns and were taken to hospital.

The tragedy comes as monsoon rains and thunderstorms sweep across northern India. Delhi received showers on Monday, offering relief from muggy conditions. The Met Office issued a yellow alert for thunderstorms, gusty winds, and lightning. The capital recorded 28.4°C with 74 per cent humidity; the air quality remained satisfactory.

In Rajasthan, several districts including Jaipur, Kota and Bharatpur witnessed heavy rainfall. The weather office has warned of intensified downpours and thunderstorms over the coming days, especially in eastern regions, as a new weather system develops over the Bay of Bengal. —*PTI*

BACKLASH OVER WEDDING BELLS

The photo released by Greenpeace, on Monday shows a group of people with a large banner protesting against Amazon founder Jeff Bezos' and Lauren Sanchez wedding in St. Mark Square, in Venice, Italy. This protest follows previous week's anti-Bezos movement where a banner was draped from the San Giorgio bell tower. The anti-Bezos or 'No Space for Bezos' movement is a play on words referring to Bezo's bride Sanchez's recent space visit ***PHOTO: PTI***

Netanyahu's legacy may be reshaped by war with Iran

Netanyahu at Jerusalem's Western Wall, a sacred site for both Jews and Muslims ***PHOTO: X/@NETANYAHU***

In the days after Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October, 2023, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seemed a shellshocked shadow of himself. He looked diminished and downtrodden by the surprise assault that created a national emergency and caused his public support to plummet.

Now, as Israel faces another unprecedented crisis in a war with Iran, Netanyahu appears rejuvenated. With US lending its support against a threat he has devoted his life to confronting, Netanyahu is demonstrating a resurgent confidence that could signal a new turning point in his lengthy political career.

Even as Iranian missiles pound Israeli cities, Netanyahu, 75, has the chance to salvage his sagging political fortunes and reshape a legacy punctured by Hamas' attacks, a corruption trial and a history of divisive rule. If he succeeds, it will cement his reputation within Israel as a political wizard who can rise from the ashes.

"Netanyahu has proven that he is a phoenix," said veteran Israeli journalist and Netanyahu biographer Mazal Mualem.

The war is far from won. Israel is still vulnerable to Iranian attacks, and whatever political boost Netanyahu gains from the latest developments could dissipate by elections scheduled for next year. He is the same polarizing leader he was yesterday.

Internationally, he faces an arrest warrant for charges of war crimes in Gaza. He is widely reviled across the Arab world. And after nearly two years of regionwide conflict, many critics see him as a warmonger responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in Gaza and elsewhere in the Middle East.

But domestically, where Netanyahu's eyes are always focused, his legacy has been granted a lifeline.

Many Israelis are attuned to Netanyahu's campaign against Iran's nuclear programme, which they view as a major threat to their country and are therefore relieved by the direct involvement of the US military.

In an early morning video statement after the US strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, Netanyahu could barely contain a smile as he thanked President Donald Trump. He said the intervention would "change history."

It's a stunning turnaround for an Israeli leader who critics and analysts largely wrote off in the days after 7 October, when he presided over the deadliest attack in Israel's history. Many hold Netanyahu personally responsible for overseeing policies that enabled Hamas to retain power in Gaza for many years and build up a formidable arsenal.

The week-old assault on Iran, highlighted by Sunday's US attack, grants Netanyahu a chance for salvation.

The war caps a yearslong focus — some would say obsession — by Netanyahu on Iran and its nuclear program. Since his first term as prime minister in the 1990s, and throughout his current, nearly uninterrupted 16-year rule, he has made challenging Iran's nuclear program his life's work.

Netanyahu has long portrayed Iran as an existential threat — pointing not only to its nuclear program, but also its development of long-range missiles aimed at Israel and support for hostile militant groups on Israel's borders.

Iran became a repeated theme in his speeches to the Israeli and international public. He famously hoisted a cartoon bomb from the dais of UN General Assembly as he accused Iran of developing a nuclear weapon. Iran insists the program is for civilian purposes. At the same time, Netanyahu has made no mention of Israel's own widely suspected nuclear weapons arsenal.

Some critics say that it was Netanyahu's laser focus on Iran, and the military and intelligence resources devoted to it, that blinded Israeli leader and the defense establishment to threat Hamas in Gaza.

Hamas' attack, in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken hostage, blindsided Israel. Netanyahu, who likes to portray himself as a security hawk and the only true guardian of Israel, is seen by many as having promoted a failed strategy in the years preceding the 7 October, attack by sending huge amounts of aid into in Gaza under the misconception that Hamas was deterred.

In fact, the Palestinian militant group would stage a brutal assault that would crush Israel's vaunted defenses and change the course of history.

In the aftermath of Hamas' attack, Netanyahu's public support plummeted.

Netanyahu shrugged off accountability for Hamas' attacks, pointing a finger at his security chiefs and rejecting demands for a public inquiry into the failures.

Netanyahu's work is not done. The war in Gaza grinds on, and Netanyahu still dreams of seeing a normalisation deal between Israel and Arab powerhouse Saudi Arabia as part of his legacy.

The question remains whether Netanyahu will rebound politically from the Iran war. Polls taken last week showed that Netanyahu would still struggle to form a coalition if elections were held today.

"Bibi may be King of Israel," Bushinsky said, using a nickname for Netanyahu popular among his supporters, "but even a king has his limits." *—PTI*

LETTERS

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SALAR سالار

NATO summit to test unity among 32 allies

US President Donald Trump and his NATO counterparts are due to gather Tuesday for a summit that could unite the world's biggest security organisation around a new defence spending pledge or widen divisions among the 32 allies.

Just a week ago, things had seemed rosy. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte was optimistic the European members and Canada would commit to invest at least as much of their economic growth on defence as US does for the first time.

Then Spain rejected the new NATO target for each country to spend 5 per cent of its gross domestic product on defence needs, calling it "unreasonable." Trump also insists on that figure.

The following day, Trump said US should not have to respect the goal.

"I don't think we should, but I think they should," he said. Trump lashed out at Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's government, saying: "NATO is going to have to deal with Spain. Spain's been a very low payer." He also criticised Canada as "a low payer."

Spain was the lowest spender in the alliance last year, directing less than 2 per cent of its GDP on defence expenditure, while Canada was spending 1.45 per cent, according to NATO figures.

Then Trump ordered the bombing of nuclear installations in Iran.

European allies and Canada also want Ukraine to be at the top of the summit agenda, but they are wary that Trump might not want President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to steal the limelight.

The two-day summit in The Hague involves an informal dinner Tuesday and one working session Wednesday morning. A very short summit statement has been drafted to ensure the meeting is not derailed by fights over details and wording.

Indeed, much about this NATO summit is brief, even though ripples could be felt for years.

Founded in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was formed by 12 nations to counter the threat to security in Europe posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, notably via a strong US presence on the continent.

NATO's ranks have grown to 32 countries since the Washington Treaty was signed 75 years ago.

NATO's collective security guarantee — Article 5 of the treaty — underpins its credibility.

It's a political commitment by all countries to come to the aid of any member whose sovereignty or territory might be under attack. Trump has suggested he is committed to that pledge, but he has also sowed doubt about his intentions. He has said US intends to remain a member of the alliance.

US is NATO's most powerful member. It spends much more on defence than any other ally and far outweighs its partners in terms of military muscle. Washington has traditionally driven the agenda but has stepped back under Trump.

As its top civilian official, he chairs almost weekly meetings of ambassadors in the North Atlantic Council at its Brussels headquarters. He chairs other "NACs" at ministerial and leader levels. Rutte runs NATO headquarters, trying to foster consensus and to speak on behalf of all members.

With Trump demanding greater defence spending, it's unclear what role Ukraine will play at the summit. Zelenskyy has been invited, but it's unclear whether he will have a seat at NATO's table, although he may take part in Tuesday's dinner. Russia's war in Ukraine usually dominates such meetings.

More broadly, NATO itself is not arming Ukraine.

A key part of the commitment for allies to defend one another is to deter Russia, or any other adversary, from attacking in the first place. Finland and Sweden joined NATO recently because of this concern.

Under NATO's new military plans, 300,000 military personnel would be deployed within 30 days to counter any attack, whether it be on land, at sea, by air or in cyberspace. But experts doubt whether the allies could muster the troop numbers.

It's not just about troop and equipment numbers. An adversary would be less likely to challenge NATO if it thought the allies would use the forces it controls. Trump's threats against US allies — including imposing tariffs on them — has weakened that deterrence.

Due to high US defence spending over many years, the American armed forces have more personnel and superior weapons but also significant transportation and logistics assets.

Other allies are starting to spend more, though. After years of cuts, NATO members committed to ramp up their national defence budgets in 2014 when Russia illegally annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

In The Hague, the allies were expected to up the ante to 3.5 per cent, plus a further 1.5 per cent for things like improving roads, bridges, ports and airfields or preparing societies to deal with future conflicts. Whether they will now remain an open question. *—PTI*

The two-day summit in The Hague involves an informal dinner Tuesday and one working session Wednesday morning ***PHOTO: PTI***

Delhi's Turkman Gate residents still live with memories of Emergency

For many families in Old Delhi, the Emergency declared by then prime minister Indira Gandhi on 25 June, 1975, was not an abstract political moment but a violent rupture of their everyday life ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

In Delhi's Turkman Gate, the past still walks the narrow alleys. Fifty years after Emergency, the memories live on -- of their homes being razed, their families scattered overnight, and forced sterilisation drives carried out in the name of progress.

For many families in Old Delhi, the Emergency declared by then prime minister Indira Gandhi on 25 June, 1975 was not an abstract political moment but a violent rupture in everyday life. It was about fear, chaos and the heartbreak of losing everything, coming wrapped in an official order.

Mehru Nisha, now 74, still shudders remembering the day the demolition squad came.

"They did not give us any warning," she said, adding that her husband tried to stop them but he was shot in the leg. Even though her husband was injured she and her children were taken to Nand Nagri.

"I had no idea how he was doing, he stayed in a mosque near Turkman Gate for 15 months, as he could not walk and had nowhere else to go. I sold my jewellery just to feed my children," Nisha said.

"There was no water, no toilets, no homes. Just jungle, we women stayed together. Even if we had to use the toilet, we went in groups. That's how unsafe it was," she added.

Her husband, Abdul Hamid, now in his 80s, remembers how the protest to save their homes turned into bloodshed.

"We were trying to save our homes and then the police opened fire. I was hit in the leg, locals took me to a nearby hospital. By the time I got back, my family had vanished," he said.

The tragedy of Turkman Gate did not end with demolitions. The neighbourhood was also swept into the sterilisation drive, a campaign led by Sanjay Gandhi under the guise of population control, according to locals.

Razia Begum, now 75, said she was just 15 then and was a part of the Youth Congress.

"When Sanjay Gandhi visited Jama Masjid, I guided him around. He looked at the crowds and said the area was too densely populated and that sterilisation camps were needed," she said. Soon, makeshift camps popped up near Dujana House. Razia, not even fully aware of what sterilisation meant, began going door to door to convince people.

"We were told to talk about small families. That people should only have two or three children, or they would struggle to survive," she recalled.

"But people did not want to listen. They insulted men and asked me to leave," she said.

Begum said that in return for undergoing sterilisation, people were given cans of ghee, radios, and Rs 250. But things took a sharp turn when bulldozers knocked on Razia's doorstep.

"When the bulldozers came to Turkman Gate, I joined the protests. I stood with other women from my neighbourhood. I was also injured," she said.

Shahid Gangoi was just a first-year college student when he heard the news that would change his life.

"We were in class when the principal called us. He told us our houses were being demolished. I rushed back, but our home was already gone. My father had been arrested while offering Namaz," he recalled.

The streets of Turkman Gate were filled with broken glass and tear gas.

"Our eyes were burning, we were picked up by police trucks and dumped in Nand Nagri. That place had nothing back then no roads, no water, no shelter," Gangoi said.

The Emergency declared, citing internal and external threats to national security, lasted for 21 months.

The Emergency officially ended in 1977 after Indira Gandhi called for a general election and released several imprisoned political leaders.

Now, half a century later, the Emergency is still a living memory -- of bullets and bulldozers. The anger may have faded, but the pain has not. *—PTI*

Rescue workers and security forces comb debris at the site of an Iranian missile strike in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Sunday; Afghans who fled Iran gather at a UNHCR facility near the Islam Qala crossing in Afghanistan's western Herat province on Friday; Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian attends a protest in Tehran, following the US attacks on nuclear sites in Iran, on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

IRAN VOWS RESPONSE TO US STRIKES

Iran strikes at Hafia, Tel Aviv; Israel claims to be close to destroying Iran's nuke, missile capabilities

UNITED NATIONS, 23 JUNE

Iran has declared that its military will determine the "timing, nature and scale" of its response to US airstrikes on three of its nuclear facilities, accusing Washington of having "destroyed diplomacy."

Speaking at an emergency UN Security Council meeting, Iranian Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani said the strikes marked a "flagrant breach of international law" and warned the US against further escalation. "Iran had repeatedly warned the warmongering US regime to refrain from stumbling into this quagmire," he said, adding that Iran never left diplomatic channels despite Western pressure to "return to the negotiating table."

Iravani accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of convincing US President Donald Trump to carry out "the West's dirty work," dragging America into another "baseless war."

Israel's UN envoy Danny Danon countered, saying the US strikes "removed the greatest existential threat facing the free world." He claimed Iran had used diplomacy to stall while enriching uranium, and that "when the world stood at the edge of a nuclear catastrophe, America stepped forward."

Sirens blare in Jordan

On Monday, Iran launched a barrage of missiles and drones at Israel in a retaliatory strike, targeting the cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv under "Operation True Promise 3." Sirens sounded in northern and central Israel, and in parts of Jordan. No major damage was immediately reported. Israel's military said its defence systems were intercepting the threat. Iranian Gen Abdolrahim Mousavi warned that US strikes had given Iran a "free hand" to act against American interests. He described the attack as a violation of sovereignty, likening it to an invasion.

Iranian Ambassador Amir Saeid Iravani at a UN Security Council meeting ***PHOTO: ANI***

Meanwhile, Israeli fighter jets struck missile launchers in western Iran, and an Israeli drone was reportedly downed during operations inside the country. Prime Minister Netanyahu said Israel was "very close to achieving our goals" of neutralising Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities.

> **The bombing of Iranian nuclear facilities by the United States marks a perilous turn in a region that is already reeling. From the outset of the crisis, I have condemned any military escalation in the Middle East** —Antonio Guterres, UN chief

Israel's Defence Ministry says Israel strike Iranian government targets in Tehran, including the notorious Evin Prison in the Iranian capital.

950 dead, 3,450 others injured in Israeli strikes on Iran

Other targets include the security headquarters of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guards, the city's Palestine Square, and the paramilitary Basij volunteer corps building, which is a part of the Revolutionary guard.

Meanwhile, Pakistan will convene an emergency meeting of its National Security Committee on Monday. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the US strikes and expressed solidarity with Iran in a call with President Masoud Pezeshkian. Army Chief Asim Munir is expected to brief the committee following his visit to Washington. —*PTI*

Khalil vows to continue stir after release

Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil, detained for over three months, was welcomed at Newark Airport by supporters including US Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. Khalil, a former Columbia student, vowed to keep protesting against Israel and the Gaza war, criticising US and university support for the conflict. He was held despite no criminal charges, with Ocasio-Cortez calling his detention unconstitutional. A judge ordered his release, but the government is appealing. Khalil pledged to speak for detained immigrants as well.

Iran executes another 'Mossad spy'

Iran on Monday hanged a third man accused of being a spy of Israel's Mossad intelligence service since Israel's war on the Islamic Republic began. Activists fear more people will be executed in Iran, particularly after its theocracy issued a Sunday deadline for people to turn themselves in over spying. The judiciary's Mizan news agency identified the executed man as Mohammad Amin Mahdavi Shayesteh.

Trump wants regime change in Iran

WASHINGTON, 23 JUNE

President Donald Trump has suggested the possibility of regime change in Iran, a move that appears to contradict earlier statements by senior US officials following a surprise aerial strike on three Iranian nuclear sites.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth had clarified that the mission was "not and has not been about regime change," stressing the US does not seek war.

Vice President JD Vance supported that stance, saying the strikes aimed to pressure Iran back to the negotiating table.

However, Trump posted on his social media platform Truth Social: "If the current Iranian Regime is unable to MAKE IRAN GREAT AGAIN, why wouldn't there be a Regime change??? MIGA!!!"—a message that disrupted the administration's coordinated narrative and heightened diplomatic tensions.

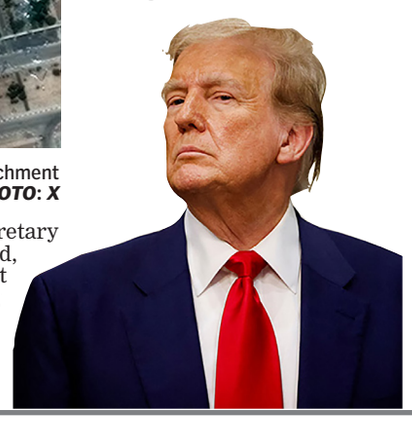
A satellite picture taken on 10 March shows the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility in central Iran ***PHOTO: X***

Lammy refuses to say if UK supported US

The UK foreign secretary has repeatedly refused to say if the UK supported the US military strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities on Saturday or whether they were legal.

Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy responded, saying he was confident the US is "not going after the civilian leadership" in Tehran. Speaking to the BBC, Lammy confirmed conversations with both Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Meanwhile, Acting US Ambassador to the UN Dorothy Shea told the Security Council that the strikes were a defensive measure, accusing Iran of obfuscation in nuclear negotiations. She warned: "Any Iranian attack – direct or indirect – will evoke devastating retali-ation." —*PTI*



US HOMELAND SECURITY WARNS OF CYBERATTACKS

WASHINGTON, 23 JUNE

The US Department of Homeland Security issued a national terrorism bulletin Sunday warning of possible cyber attacks and violence, including antisemitic hate crimes, following America's attacks on Iranian nuclear sites. The department said there are "no specific credible threats against the homeland," but noted the Iranian government has condemned the US action.

"A heightened threat environment across the United States" is expected to last throughout the summer, the bulletin said. —*PTI*

Russian President Vladimir Putin greets Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi prior to their talks in Moscow ***PHOTO: PTI***

PUTIN DEFENDS NEUTRAL STANCE ON ISRAEL

UNITED NATIONS/ST. PETERSBURG, 23 JUNE

Russian President Vladimir Putin has defended Moscow's decision to remain neutral following US strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities, citing the presence of nearly 2 million Russian-speaking people in Israel.

At the St. Petersburg Economic Forum, he also highlighted Russia's strong ties with Islamic nations and its 15% Muslim population. Meanwhile, Russia's UN envoy Vassily Nebenzia warned the US had "opened a Pandora's box" and rejected diplomacy.

He cautioned the world faces a potential nuclear disaster if escalation continues, offering Russia's mediation as a peaceful alternative. —*PTI*

Firefighters battle to contain wildfire on Greek island

ATHENS, 23 JUNE

Greek authorities sent new evacuation notifications for two areas near the main town of the eastern Aegean island of Chios Monday morning, as firefighters struggled to control a major wildfire raging on the town's outskirts for a second day. The fire department said 190 firefighters were battling the blaze Monday. They were backed up by 35 vehicles, five helicopters and two water-dropping planes. Strong winds have hampered firefighting efforts. Push alerts have been sent to mobile phones urging people to evacuate the affected area. —*PTI*

US Marine Corps veteran's wife held for deportation

BATON ROUGE, JUNE 23

Marine Corps veteran Adrian Clouatre doesn't know how to tell his children where their mother went after US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers detained her last month. His wife Paola is one of tens of thousands of people in custody and facing deportation as the Trump administration pushes for immigration officers to arrest 3,000 people a day. The same federal agency that was tasked with helping military family members gain legal status now refers them for deportation, government memos show. —*PTI*

Russian strikes on Ukraine kill 9

KYIV, 23 JUNE

A Russian drone and missile attack on Ukraine's capital overnight killed at least nine people and injured others, according to local officials, as rescue workers and firefighters sought to remove people they believed trapped under debris in a partially collapsed apartment building.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, a Russian short-range drone attack killed two people and wounded 10 more in the Chernihiv region late Sunday night, authorities said. According to the regional administration head, Viacheslav Chaus, three children were among the wounded.

Another person was killed and eight wounded overnight in the city of Bila Tserkva, around 85km southwest of the capital.

The strikes came nearly a week after a combined Russian attack on Ukraine last Tuesday killed 28 people in Kyiv, 23 of them in a residential building that collapsed after sustaining a direct hit by a missile. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called that attack one of the biggest bombardments of the war, now in its fourth year. —*PTI*

A police expert shows items collected from Russian soldiers killed in the war in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Monday ***PHOTO: PTI***

MANIPULATING ELECTIONS

B'desh poll panel's ex-chief arrested

DHAKA, 23 JUNE

Bangladesh's former chief election commissioner KM Nurul Huda has been arrested on charges of manipulating elections during his tenure, police said.

KM Nurul Huda ***PHOTO: PTI***

Dhaka metropolitan police's Deputy Commissioner Mohidul Islam on Sunday said Huda was arrested in a case filed by former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) against the former election commission chief and 18 others, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

EC officials said this was probably the first time that a former CEC has been detained over issues related to elections.

Uttara West police station chief Hafizur Rahman said, "We went to the scene after being informed that a mob has surrounded Huda. We have brought him into our custody." The Mob had dragged Huda out of his house before police arrived. —*PTI*

TRUMP'S TAX BILL MAY EASE GUN NORMS

WASHINGTON, 23 JUNE

The massive tax and spending cuts package that President Donald Trump wants on his desk by 4 July would loosen regulations on gun silencers and certain types of rifles and shotguns, advancing a long-time priority of the gun industry, as Republican leaders in the House and Senate try to win enough votes to pass the bill.

The guns provision was first requested in the House by Georgia Rep. Andrew Clyde, a Republican gun store owner who had initially opposed the larger tax package. The House bill would remove silencers from a 1930s law that regulates firearms that are considered the most dangerous, eliminating a $200 tax while removing a layer of background checks.

The Senate kept the provision on silencers in its version of the bill and expanded upon it, adding short-barreled or sawed-off rifles and shotguns. —*PTI*

'MARTIAL LAW' IMPACT

S Korea gets 1st non-military defence chief in 64 yrs

SEOUL, 23 JUNE

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung nominated a five-term liberal lawmaker as defence minister on Monday, breaking with a tradition of appointing retired military generals.

The announcement came as several prominent former defence officials, including ex-defence minister Kim Yong Hyun, face high-profile criminal trials over their roles in carrying out martial law last year under then president Yoon Suk Yeol.

Ahn Gyu-back, a lawmaker from Lee's Democratic Party, has served on the National Assembly's defence committee and chaired a legislative panel that investigated the circumstances surrounding Yoon's martial law decree.

Yoon's authoritarian move involved deploying hundreds of heavily armed troops to the National Assembly and election commission offices in what prosecutors described as an illegal attempt to shut down the legislature and arrest political opponents and election officials.

That sparked calls to strengthen civilian control over the military, and Lee promised during his election campaign to appoint a defence minister with a civilian background.

Since a 1961 coup that brought military dictator Park Chung-hee to power, all of South Korea's defence ministers have come from the military – a trend that continued even after the democratisation in the 1980s.

While Ahn will face a legislative hearing, the process is likely to be a formality, since the Democrats hold a comfortable majority in the National Assembly and legislative consent isn't required for Lee to appoint him. —*PTI*

President Lee Jae Myung's announcement came as several former defence officials, including ex-defence minister Kim Yong Hyun, face criminal trials over their roles in carrying out martial law last year ***PHOTO: X***

Gold price falls by ₹160 to ₹99,800/10g

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Gold price fell by Rs 160 to Rs 99,800 per 10g in the national capital on Monday due to continuous selling by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 99,960 per 10g on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity depreciated by Rs 150 to Rs 99,100 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 99,250 per 10g in the previous market close.However, silver traded flat at Rs 1,05,200 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Monday. On the global front, spot gold went lower marginally to USD 3,365.40 per ounce. Despite muted festive buying, investment demand for bars and coins, especially 10g coins remains robust, driven by inflation fears, loan-linked monetisation, and lower fabrication costs. *—PTI*

Rupee sinks 23P, closes at 86.78 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

The rupee plunged 23 paise to close at a five-month low of 86.78 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid a strengthening dollar and volatile crude oil prices following the US strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. A sharp decline in the domestic equity markets further pressured the rupee, according to forex experts. However, strong FII inflows, along with a rise in the country's forex reserves prevented further losses in the rupee, they said. At the interbank foreign exchange the rupee opened at 86.75 against the greenback and traded in the range of 87.67 to 86.85 before settling at its five-month low of 86.78 (provisional), down 23 paise from its previous close of 86.55 on Friday. *—PTI*

Realty firm plans ₹1.6K cr project in Bengaluru

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Realty firm Embassy Developments Ltd has partnered with a landowner to build a 18-acre housing project in Bengaluru with a revenue potential of about Rs 1,600 crore. In a regulatory filing on Monday, the company announced the signing of a Joint Development Agreement (JDA) for 17.9-acres land parcel in Whitefield, Bengaluru. "The planned development will comprise a premium residential community with an estimated Gross Development Value (GDV) of around Rs 1,600 crore," it added. Meanwhile, In a regulatory filing on Monday, Godrej Properties informed that it has sold assets "worth over Rs 2,000 crore during the launch of the first phase of the project, Barca at Godrej MSR City, located in Devanahalli, Bengaluru". *—PTI*

NTPC plans to raise ₹18,000 cr via bonds

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Power giant NTPC has announced plans to secure shareholder approval for raising up to Rs 18,000 crore through the issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs) in the domestic market. In a regulatory filing, the state-owned company revealed that it will seek a special resolution via a postal ballot, allowing for the issuance of secured or unsecured, redeemable, taxable or tax-free, cumulative or non-cumulative NCDs. The fundraising, which may occur in multiple series not exceeding 12, is intended to support ongoing capacity expansion and meet capital expenditure needs, primarily through private placement. The company has set a cut-off date of 20 June 2025 for voting rights and will commence remote e-voting from 24 June until 23 July *—PTI*

India moves to 4th place in defence imports: Report

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

BTraditionally heavily reliant on foreign suppliers for defence equipment, India has significantly reduced its dependence on defence imports over the last 14 years, marking a major shift in its defence strategy and policy.

According to a report by Kotak Mutual Fund, India, which in 2010 was the largest importer of defence equipment, slipped to fourth place in 2024.

In 2010, India accounted for 11 per cent of the world's total defence imports, making it the top importer globally. Pakistan with nine per cent, Australia, at six per cent and South Korea at 5 per cent, followed suit.

Countries like Saudi Arabia, the United States, Singapore, and China each had a four per cent share, while Algeria and Portugal accounted for three per cent each. The remaining 47 per cent was shared among other countries.

The report said this decline is the result of India's focus on indigenisation and strengthening domestic defence manufacturing.

As per the 2024 data, Ukraine is the world's largest defence equipment importer, with 18 per cent of the global imports. This sharp rise has been attributed to to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Poland has emerged as the second-largest importer, with a 5 per cent share of global imports, followed by the United States in third place, with a 4 per cent share. India now shares the fourth position along with Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and Australia, each holding a 4 per cent share of global imports.

Other countries, like Japan and Pakistan, each account for 3 per cent of the global imports. The "Others" category, which includes all remaining nations, remained unchanged at 47 per cent in both 2010 and 2024. *—ANI*

Slump in Indian markets amid Middle East conflict

Sensex tumbles 511.38 pts while Nifty dropps by 140.50 pts

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled on Monday, as intensifying tensions in the Middle East after the US bombed three major nuclear sites in Iran unnerved investors.

Besides, selling pressure in IT, tech and auto stocks amid elevated global crude prices dented market sentiments, traders said.

After losing over 900 points in day trade, the 30-share index recovered some lost ground to close with a loss of 511.38 points or 0.62 per cent at 81,896.79.

During the day, it tumbled 931.41 points or 1.13 per cent to 81,476.76. As many as 2,204 stocks declined, while 1,854 advanced and 182 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 140.50 points or 0.56 per cent to 24,971.90.

The US bombed three major nuclear sites -- Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan -- in Iran, directly engaging itself in the Israel-Iran conflict. *—PTI*

GLOBAL MARKETS TAKE A HIT

Global shares retreated on Monday as concerns over escalating conflict in the Middle East weighed on investor sentiment. Here's how major world indices performed amid the market jitters

- US' S&P 500: 0.3% ↓
- US' Dow: 0.3% ↓
- US' Nasdaq: 0.5% ↓
- Taiwan's Taiex: 1.4% ↓
- South Korea's Kospi: 0.2% ↓
- Tokyo's Nikkei 225: 0.2% ↓
- Australia's S&P/ASX: 0.4% ↓
- China's Shanghai Composite: 0.5% ↑

Bitcoin crosses $1L mark amid global tension

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Bitcoin bounced back on Sunday, crossing USD 101,000 after US and Israeli airstrikes targeting Iranian nuclear facilities. Other cryptocurrencies also registered gains.

Although Bitcoin experienced a sell-off at the peak of the weekend news, traders made a comeback as risk appetite grew. On Sunday, Bitcoin fell below the USD 99,000-level, while Ether saw a sharp decline of more than 10 per cent. Along with Bitcoin, Solana, XRP and Dogecoin also suffered significant losses, leading to a steep overall drop across the digital asset space.

CoinGlass data shows over $1.04 billion was invested in spot bitcoin ETFs between last Monday and Wednesday. However, inflows slowed as the weekend approached, with no net change on Thursday and only USD 6.4 million added on Friday. *—Agencies*

Birla's Lifestyle Brands makes market debut

Shares of Aditya Birla Lifestyle Brands Ltd made its market debut on Monday post demerger. The stock started trading at Rs 167.75 and later jumped 4.97 per cent to Rs 176.10 apiece during the day on the BSE. It finally ended at Rs 159.40, down 4.97 per cent.

Oil hits five-month high amid Iran tensions

SINGAPORE, 23 JUNE

Oil prices soared on Monday 23 June to their highest levels since January after the United States joined Israel in attacking Iran's nuclear facilities, raising fears of supply disruptions.

Brent crude rose by $1.92, or 2.49 per cent, to $78.93 a barrel at 0117 GMT, after earlier touching $81.40. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) climbed $1.89, or 2.56 per cent, to $75.73, having hit a five-month high of $78.40.

The price jump followed President Donald Trump's announcement that US strikes had "obliterated" key Iranian nuclear sites over the weekend. Iran, OPEC's third-largest producer, has threatened retaliation and may close the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil flows.

Iran's parliament has reportedly approved such a move. Though alternative routes exist, closure of the strait would still severely limit exports.

Goldman Sachs warns Brent could spike to $110 if flows halve for a month. Brent has already risen 13 per cent since the conflict began on 13 June. *—Agencies*

LACK OF SHIPS, INSURANCE COVER

1L tonne basmati rice for Iran stuck at Indian ports

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Approximately 100,000 tonnes of basmati rice set for export to Iran are currently stranded at Indian ports due to the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran, according to the All India Rice Exporters Association.

Association president Satish Goyal reported that shipments are primarily held up at Kandla and Mundra ports in Gujarat, with the lack of available vessels and insurance for Iran-bound cargo cited as key issues. International conflicts are typically excluded from standard shipping insurance, leaving exporters unable to dispatch their goods.

"The delay in shipments and uncertainty surrounding payments may cause serious financial strain," Goyal warned, noting that domestic basmati rice prices have already fallen by Rs 4-5 per kilogram.

The association is collaborating with the Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority to address the situation and has scheduled a meeting with Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on 30 June to discuss the crisis.

Iran represents India's second-largest basmati rice market after Saudi Arabia, with approximately 1 million tonnes exported during the 2024-25 fiscal year. Overall, India exported around 6 million tonnes of basmati rice during that period, with demand primarily driven by Middle Eastern and West Asian markets, including Iraq, UAE, and US. *—PTI*

Adani commissions India's first off-grid hydrogen plant

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Adani Group has announced the commissioning of India's first off-grid 5 megawatt (MW) green hydrogen pilot plant in Kutch, Gujarat. Developed by Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL), the clean energy arm of Adani Enterprises, the facility marks a major step forward in India's push for green energy.

Entirely powered by solar energy and integrated with a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), the plant operates independently of the national electricity grid. It produces green hydrogen using an advanced, closed-loop electrolyser system that dynamically adapts to fluctuating solar input, ensuring operational efficiency, safety, and reliability.

The initiative aligns with the National Green Hydrogen Mission, a key government programme aimed at reducing import dependence, enhancing energy security, and accelerating decarbonisation in high-emission sectors such as fertilisers, refining, and heavy transport.

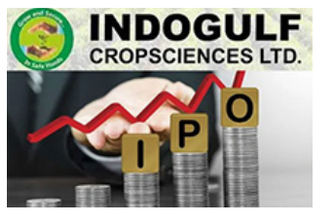
Green hydrogen, created through electrolysis using renewable energy, emits only water vapour when used. This clean fuel is vital for achieving India's net-zero goals and establishing the country as a global hub for green hydrogen production.

Adani's pilot facility also acts as a proof of concept for its upcoming Green Hydrogen Hub in Mundra, which will include integrated manufacturing of solar modules, wind turbines, and electrolysers. The project reinforces Adani Group's commitment to sustainable innovation and self-reliant energy solutions. *—PTI*

Indogulf sets ₹105–111 IPO price band

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Indogulf Cropsciences, a manufacturer of crop protection products, has announced a price band of Rs 105-111 per equity share for its forthcoming initial public offering (IPO), aiming to raise Rs 200 crore. The IPO will open for subscription from 26 June to 30 June, with bidding for anchor investors starting one day earlier on 25 June. The issue comprises a fresh equity share offering of Rs 160 crore



and an offer for sale of up to 3.6 million shares by promoters. Proceeds will fund working capital, debt repayment, capital expenditure, and general corporate purposes.

In a related development, Paper Arizona, a startup B2B marketplace for paper and packaging products, has confirmed plans for an IPO in the second half of 2026. The company surpassed Rs 100 crore in annual revenues in FY 2024-25 and is on track to reach Rs 130 crore this fiscal year. Co-Founder and CEO Ankitt Jain indicated that the IPO will facilitate significant growth and expansion within India's paper supply chain. *—PTI*

BluPine bags ₹2,416 cr funding for energy project

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

BluPine Energy on Monday said it has secured Rs 2,416 crore debt financing for its 150 MW Firm and Dispatchable Renewable Energy (FDRE) Power Project in Aland, Karnataka.

The project, undertaken by its wholly-owned subsidiary Solarcraft Power India 16 Pvt Ltd, is being developed under the SJVN 1,500 MW FDRE tender dated June 20, 2023, a company statement said.

BluPine Energy Pvt Ltd (henceforth BluPine Energy), an Actis-backed leading renewable energy platform, on Monday announced the successful debt sanction of Rs 2,416 crore for its 150 MW FDRE Power Project in Aland, Karnataka, the statement said. Standard Chartered acted as the mandated lead arranger, lender, sole green coordinator and account bank for the instant transaction. *—PTI*

EASE VESSEL CONGESTION

Kandla Port assures smooth edible oil imports

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Gujarat's Kandla Port has pledged to address vessel congestion issues and ensure uninterrupted edible oil supplies, the Indian Vegetable Oil Producers' Association (IVPA) said on Monday.

The assurance came during a meeting between industry representatives and Kandla Port Chairman Sushil Kumar Singh, aimed at resolving bottlenecks that have affected imports of palm oil and other edible oils.

Singh outlined infrastructure improvements, including new 14-inch pipelines and preparations to handle edible oil at two additional berths with dedicated pipelines, the IVPA said in a statement.

Gujarat's Kandla Port **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

The port authority agreed to maintain its existing system of imposing penalty charges for delayed vessel discharges rather than moving ships to outer anchorage for re-berthing, which creates additional costs for importers, the association said.

Singh emphasised the need for coordination between port officials and importers to minimise delays after vessels dock, and urged vessel agents to flag potential issues before ships arrive or during daily berthing meetings.

Kandla Port serves as a major gateway for India's edible oil imports, particularly palm oil.

The port chairman welcomed input from vessel agents, surveyors, terminal operators and customs brokers to streamline discharge processes and improve operational efficiency. India is the world's largest importer of edible oils, with palm oil accounting for the bulk of its overseas purchases. *—PTI*

SECI to finalise 7.24 lakh tonne green ammonia deal

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

State-owned Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) is set to finalise a tender for production and supply of 7.24 lakh tonne (LT) of green ammonia annually across 13 fertiliser plants under Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition scheme.

Ammonia, an essential component in urea and other nitrogen-based fertilisers, is currently produced using fossil fuels, leading to high greenhouse gas emissions. The SECI's tender uses renewable energy to produce green hydrogen and ammonia, promoting low-emission domestic fertiliser production.

SECI will anchor demand aggregation and sign long-term offtake agreements, providing producers with market certainty over a 10-year contract period. The tender was issued on 7 June, 2024 and the last date for bid submission is 26 June, 2025.

To ensure financial viability, the government is offering incentives under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, with Production Linked Incentives of Rs 8.82/kg, Rs 7.06/kg and Rs 5.30/kg for the first three years, respectively. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

I should have scored my centuries: Ganguly

KOLKATA, 23 JUNE

former India skipper Sourav Ganguly, who regrets missing many hundreds during his cricketing journey. The elegant left-hander of his times, Ganguly scored 18575 runs in Tests and ODIs but regrets missing many centuries in his career, in which he competed in 311 ODIs and 113 Tests. Ganguly's remorse came to the fore when he was asked what advice he would give to his old self. "I missed a lot of hundreds; I should have scored more. Too many 90s and 80s," Ganguly told PTI in an interaction. A look at his statistics showed that Ganguly got out in the 80s and 90s several times. Exact 30 times. *—PTI*

Real Madrid beat Pachuca at Club WC

Gündogan has two goals: Haaland scores as Man City routs Al Ain 6-0

PHILADELPHIA, 23 JUNE

Real Madrid showed grit and quality as they overcame an early red card to beat Mexico's Pachuca 3-1 on Sunday, moving a step closer to the knockout stage of the FIFA Club World Cup.

The win, at Bank of America Stadium in North Carolina, puts Madrid atop Group H with four points, while Pachuca is eliminated following back-to-back defeats. The match got off to a dramatic start when Raul Asencio was sent off in just the 7th minute for denying Salomon Rondon a clear goalscoring opportunity.

Down to ten men, Real appeared vulnerable, with Pachuca testing Thibaut Courtois early through Kenedy and Alan Bautista. However, the Belgian goalkeeper was equal to the task, making key saves to keep the game level. Madrid soon took control despite their numerical disadvantage. In the 35th minute, a slick team move opened the scoring - Gonzalo Garcia's deft flick released Fran Garcia, who fed Jude Bellingham, and the Englishman calmly slotted home with his left foot.

Two minutes later, Arda Guler made it 2-0, finishing off a well-worked move initiated by Trent Alexander-Arnold's low cross and another clever lay-off from Gonzalo.

Pachuca came out strong after the break, launching a series of attacks on Courtois's goal, but the Madrid keeper stood firm. Substitute John Kennedy, Rondon, and Bryan Gonzalez all came close, while Javier Eduardo Lopez squandered a golden chance after a defensive lapse. Ilkay Gündogan had a pair of goals, **Erling Haaland** scored on a penalty, and Manchester City locked up its spot in the knockout round of the Club World Cup with a 6-0 rout of Al Ain on Sunday night.Claudio Echeverri, Oscar Bobb, and Rayan Cherki also scored for City, which is trying to put an encouraging capper on a disappointing season. The English powerhouse finished third in the Premier League after four straight championships and went down to Real Madrid in the knockout playoff of the UEFA Champions League. With an entirely new lineup after a 2-0 win over Morocco's Wydad in the opening group game, Man City produced a dominating performance in Atlanta against an overmatched club from the United Arab Emirates. The time of possession was a staggering 74% in favor of the English side, which outshot Al Ain 21-5. *—PTI*

Manchester City booked their place in the Club World Cup last 16 with an emphatic 6-0 rout of Al Ain in Atlanta
PHOTO: X/@MANCITY

PHOTO: X

Lalit Upadhyay retires from Int'l Hockey

NEW DELHI, 23 JUNE

Veteran Indian hockey forward Lalit Upadhyay has called time on his illustrious international career, drawing curtains on over a decade-long journey that saw him be a part of the teams that won bronze medals in the Tokyo and Paris Olympic Games. From making his debut at the 2014 World Cup to standing tall on the Olympic podium twice, Lalit's career is a timeline of some of Indian hockey's biggest milestones in the modern era. He was a crucial part of the squad that scripted history at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, helping India clinch a long-awaited bronze medal, and repeated the feat at the Paris Games in 2024, reinforcing his reputation as a big-match player. This journey began in a small village, with limited resources but limitless dreams.*—PTI*

English media hails Jasprit Bumrah as 'most complete fast bowler of all time' after inspirational show at Headingley PHOTO: PTI

Some said I will be finished in 8 months: Bumrah

LEEDS, 23 JUNE

His critics expected him to go from 'boom' to bust within eight to ten months due to his unconventional, injury-prone bowling action, but it is Jasprit Bumrah's self-belief that has enabled the Indian pace spearhead to complete nearly a decade in international cricket. Having taken his 14th five-wicket haul in Tests on Sunday, Bumrah spoke about his secret recipe for success. Asked if he feels bad when people write his epitaph after every big injury, Bumrah replied: "People had said in all these years (I will play only) eight months, some said 10 months, but now I have played 10 years of international cricket, 12-13 years of IPL.

"Even now, people say (after every injury), he will be finished, he is gone. Let them say, I will do my work. Every four months, these things will crop up, but as long as the almighty wants, I will play.

"I prepare my best, and then will leave it on God as to how much more blessings he will bestow upon me."

Bumrah, who took 5 for 83 in England's first innings in the opening Test, said that he is not here to change people's perceptions. *—PTI*

ANDERSON -TENDULKAR TROPHY

Pant becomes 2nd wicketkeeper to score 2 hundreds in a Test

LEEDS, 23 JUNE

Rishabh Pant became the second wicketkeeper-batter ever to score two hundred in a Test match during India's opener against England at Headingley in Leeds on Monday.

Andy Flower of Zimbabwe was the first to do so, scoring two hundreds (142 & 199*) against South Africa at Harare in 2001. The 27-year-old now has the highest match aggregate for an Indian wicketkeeper-batter, breaking Budhi Kunderan's record of 230 vs England in Chennai in 1964.

Pant also becomes the seventh Indian to bring up twin hundreds in a Test, joining an elite list of players including Sunil Gavaskar, Vijay Hazare, Rahul Dravid, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and Ajinkya Rahane.

Rahul scored a gritty 100

KL Rahul brought up a brilliant century on Day 4 of the 1st Test at Headingley. Rahul reached his milestone with a classy drive for two off Shoaib Bashir, earning hugs and smiles from the Indian dressing room. The right-hander kissed the Indian crest on his helmet and embraced Pant after completing what was described as one of his finest Test innings. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Ryder Cup captain Bradley wins Travelers title

CROMWELL, 23 JUNE

Akshay Bhatia had a tame finish with two double bogeys in the final round for a card of 4-over 74 that saw him finish in Tied-54th place in the Signature event. Bhatia, who had rounds of 70-70-68-74, was 4-over 282 for the week. In the final round, Bhatia started on the tenth and had just one birdie on the 17th, which was his eighth hole. He double bogeyed the par-5 13th, bogeyed the 18h and double bogeyed the Par-4 ninth, his closing hole. This season, Bhatia's best has been a third place at the Players Championship.*—PTI*

Shaw seeks approval to leave Mumbai

MUMBAI, 23 JUNE

Embattled India batter Prithvi Shaw wants to snap ties with his home team, Mumbai, and has sought a No Objection Certificate from the MCA to sign up with a new domestic side for his "growth and development as a cricketer".Shaw has been out of reckoning from the red ball set-up for some time, but has played white ball cricket. However, his off-field disciplinary issues have grabbed more airtime than his on-field performances.

A senior MCA (Mumbai Cricket Association) official confirmed to PTI on Monday that the governing body has received a letter from Shaw. *—PTI*

Prithvi Shaw

Neeraj Chopra aims to win at Golden Spike Ostrava

OSTRAVA, 23 JUNE

Unwilling to put himself under pressure of regular 90m throws, Indian javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra says he has a good feeling about Tuesday's Golden Spike Athletics meet here as he builds up for his ultimate goal this year a top finish at the World Championship in Tokyo.

Chopra defeated Julian Weber to win the Paris Diamond League with a throw of 88.16m last week.

The two-time Olympic medallist said that with Czech great Jan Zelezny by his side as his coach, and with his determination, he is confident of good results.The 27-year-old is riding high on his maiden 90 m-plus throw that he achieved in the season-opening Diamond League meet in Doha."I am really happy to work with such a great athlete and coach. I've already thrown 90m this year after a little bit more improvement in technique. So let's see when it comes next time, but I am ready. Recently, we've done a good training in Nymburk (Czech Republic), so I'll do my best here in Ostrava," he said."Main goal for the season is obviously World Championships in Tokyo," added the Haryana-lad who won a gold at the previous edition of the biennial showpiece.

Chopra said a part of his excitement for Tuesday's event comes from watching on TV, greats like Usain Bolt, compete here in the past."When I was a kid, I watched a lot of videos and photos of athletes like Usain Bolt competing here.

I came last year, but I didn't compete because of an injury."Now I feel good, but I don't want to put any pressure on myself for 90m.

Interestingly, Rohler won the javelin title in the 2018 IAAF Continental Cup in Ostrava with a throw of 87.07m, with Chopra finishing sixth. On Tuesday, Chopra will be hoping to go even.

But I'll try hard."The World Athletics Championships will be held in Tokyo from September 13 to 21 this year.

Besides the World Championships, Chopra is also excited about the Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin throw meet to be held in Bengaluru on 5 July. *—PTI*

Kamal Chawla, Paras Gupta book knockout berths

COLOMBO, 23 JUNE

Kamal and Gupta

Reigning IBSF champion Kamal Chawla powered into the pre-quarterfinals with an all-win record from his group in the Asian 6-Red Snooker Championship here on Monday.

In his third and final Group 'C' match, the Indian ace outclassed Ming Wa Man of Hong Kong 4-0.

Chawla had beaten Sri Lanka's Thiyagarajah Thanjeewan, also by a similar margin, in a late-night match on Sunday.

Later, national champion Paras Gupta joined Chawla in the last-16 stage. Pushpender Singh, the third Indian in the fray, however, failed to cut.

Chawla had runs of 39 (first frame), 35 (third), and 43 in the fourth to top the group for the loss of just one frame.Faced with a must-win situation in his final Group D match, Gupta held his nerve under pressure in the deciding frame against Qatar's Mohanna Al Obaidli.

The 29-year-old, who led 3-1 at one stage, suffered mid-match blues to give his opponent a look-in.

But before much damage could be done, he capitalised on Obaidli's error by making a gritty match-winning break of 32 to advance to the knockouts.

Results: Group A: Awais Ullah Munir (Pak) beat Pushpender Singh (Ind) 4-2 (1-51 (37), 47-0, 66-0, 10-46, 34-21, 33-21).

Group C: Kamal Chawla (Ind) beat Ming Wa Man (HK) 4-0 (53 (39) -0, 41-18, 74 (35) -20, 43 (43) -1); Kamal (Ind) beat Thiyagarajah Thanjeewan (SL) 4-0 (47 (42) -0, 40-0, 40 (37) -2, 32 (31) -21). *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Indians falter on final day, Diksha and Tvesa finish 46th

BEROUN, 23 JUNE

Amandeep Drall, who began the week with a stunning 8-under 64, finished the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open with rounds of 72-73 and ended T-46th at the end of the tournament. Also finishing in similar 46th place were Diksha (68) and Tvesa Malik (68), while Hitaashee Bakshi (74) was T-62 and Sneha Singh (72) was T-65. Amandeep had three birdies, two bogeys, and a double bogey in 73, while Diksha had six birdies against two bogeys, and Tvesa Malik had five birdies against one bogey in her 4-under card. *—PTI*

India tops medal tally at Seychelles Boxing

MAHE, 23 JUNE

Indian boxers signed off on a high, bagging a total of seven medals, including three gold, to finish atop the standings at the Seychelles National Day Boxing Tournament held here.

In addition to the gold medals, India clinched three silver and one bronze, finishing one medal ahead of Mauritius in the overall tally at the Paradise Arena.

Among the highlights, Himanshu Sharma (50kg) secured gold via walkover, while Ashish Mudshaniya (55kg) registered a commanding 4-1 split decision win in his final.

In the 90+ kg summit clash,

Gaurav Chauhan held his nerve in a tense bout to eke out a narrow 3-2 victory and claim the third gold for the country.

The silver medals came through hard-fought efforts from Anmol (60kg), Aditya Yadav (65kg), and Neeraj (75kg), all of whom lost their finals by identical 2-3 split decisions despite spirited performances. *—PTI*

PUBLIC SPENDING

Paris Olympics cost $6.8 billion, find auditors

PARIS, 23 JUNE

French taxpayers footed a nearly₹6 billion bill to host the 2024 Paris Olympics, the country's highest audit authority said in a report published Monday.

France's Court of Auditors found that state and local authorities spent ₹2.77 billion to help organize the Games and an additional ₹3.19 billion on infrastructure. The French government had initially promised that public funding for the Games would cost around ₹1 billion.

Tony Estanguet, the president of the 2024 Paris Organizing Committee, disputed the auditors' figures in a response included in their report and said the true public cost attributable to the event "does not exceed ₹2 billion." He also noted that the projected economic benefits linked to the Olympics are "three to five times that amount."

Both Estanguet and Prime Minister François Bayrou, whose response was also included in the report, stressed that the Court of Auditors had failed to adequately quantify the long-term benefits of the Games, including the infrastructure investments that will benefit Parisians long after the Olympics finish, and focused solely on tallying up expenditures. For example, the French government spent an additional ₹214 million to extend the Paris metro network to make Olympic sites accessible via public transport by the time the Games began.

The president of the Court of Auditors projected before the Olympics began that they would cost ₹3 to ₹5 billion. The report notes that the Games' organizing committee was "largely self-funded," but that public funds were used to ensure the event's success. *—PTI*